THE COMMON LOT

ROBERT HERRICK

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THE COMMON LOT

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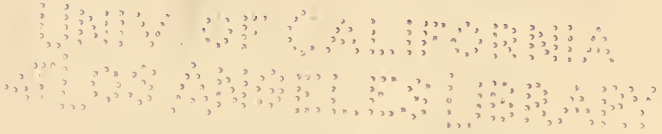
THE COMMON LOT

BY

ROBERT HERRICK

AUTHOR OF "THE WEB OF LIFE," "THE REAL WORLD," ETC.



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TO

E. H. A.

AND

M. T. A.

Part I

THE WILL

THE COMMON LOT

CHAPTER I

From time to time the door opened to admit some tardy person. Then the May sunlight without flooded the dim, long hall with a sudden radiance, even to the arched recess in the rear, where the coffin was placed. The late-comers sank into the crowd of black-coated men, who filled the hall to the broad stairs. Most of these were plainly dressed, with thick, grizzled beards and lined faces: they were old hands from the Bridge Works on the West Side, where they had worked many years for Powers Jackson. In the parlors at the left of the hall there were more women than men, and more fashionable clothes than in the hall. But the faces were scarcely less rugged and lined; for these friends of the old man who lay in the coffin were mostly life-worn and gnarled, like himself. Their luxuries had not sufficed to hide the scars of the battles they had waged with fortune.

When the minister ceased praying, the men and the women in the warm, flower-scented rooms moved gratefully, trying to get easier positions for their cramped bodies. Some members of a church choir, stationed at the landing on the stairs, began to sing. Once more the

door opened silently in the stealthy hands of the undertaker, and this time it remained open for several seconds. A woman entered, dressed in fashionable widow's mourning. She moved deliberately, as if she realized exactly the full effect of her entrance at that moment among all these heated, tired people. The men crowded in the hall made way for her instinctively, so that she might enter the dining-room, to the right of the coffin, where the family and a few intimate friends of the dead man were seated. Here, a young man, the nephew of Powers Jackson, rose and surrendered his chair to the pretty widow, whispering: —

"Take this, Mrs. Phillips! I am afraid there is nothing inside."

She took his place by the door with a little deprecatory smile, which said many things at the same time: "I am very late, I know; but I really couldn't help it! You will forgive me, won't you?"

And also: "You have come to be a handsome young man! When I saw you last you were only a raw boy, just out of college! Now we must reckon with you, as the old man's heir, — the heir of so much money!"

Then again: "It is a long time since we met over there across the sea. And I have had my sorrows, too!"

All this her face seemed to speak swiftly, especially to the young man, whose attention she had quite distracted, as indeed she had disturbed every one in the other rooms by her progress through the hall. By the time she had settled herself, and made a first survey of the scene, the hymn had come to an end, and the minister's deep voice

broke forth in the words of ancient promise, "I am the Resurrection and the Life" . . .

At this note of triumph the pretty widow's interruption was forgotten. Something new stirred in the weary faces of those standing in the hall, touching each one according to his soul, vibrating in his heart with a meaning personal to him, to her, quite apart from any feeling that they might have for their old friend, in the hope for whose immortality it had been spoken. . . .

"I am the Resurrection and the Life" . . . "yet in my flesh shall I see God" . . .

The words fell fatefully into the close rooms. The young man who had given his chair to Mrs. Phillips unconsciously threw back his head and raised his eyes from the floor, as though he were following some point of light which had burst into sight above his head. His gaze swept over his mother's large, inexpressive countenance, his cousin Everett's sharp features, the solemn, blank faces of the other mourners in the room. It rested on the face of a young woman, who was seated on the other side of the little room, almost hidden by the roses and the lilies that were banked on the table between them. She, too, had raised her face at the triumphant prophecy, and was seeing something beyond the walls of the room, beyond the reach of the man's eyes. Her lips had parted in a little sigh of wonder; her blue eyes were filled with unwept tears. The young man's attention was arrested by those eyes and trembling lips, and he forgot the feeling that the minister's words had roused, in sudden apprehension of the girl's beauty and tenderness. He

had discovered the face in a moment of its finest illumination, excited by a vague yet pure emotion, so that it became all at once more than it had ever promised.

The tears trembled at the eyelids, then dropped unnoticed to the face. The young man looked away hastily, with an uncomfortable feeling in beholding all this emotion. He could not see why Helen Spellman should take his uncle's death so much to heart, although the old man had always been kind to her and to her mother. She had come to the house a great deal, for her mother and his uncle had been life-long friends, and the old man loved to have the girl about his home. Yet he did not feel his uncle's death that way; he wondered whether he ought to be affected by it as Helen was. He was certainly much nearer to the dead man than she, — his nephew, the son of his sister Amelia, who had kept his house all the many years of her widowhood. And — he was aware that people were in the habit of saying it — he was his favorite relative, the one who would inherit the better part of the property. This last reflection set his mind to speculating on the impending change in his own world, — that new future which he pleasantly dreamed might bring him nearer to *her*. For the last few days, ever since the doctors had given up all hope of the old man's recovery, he had not been able to keep his imagination from wandering in the fields of this strange, delightful change in his affairs, which was so near at hand. . . .

"There is a natural body," so the minister was saying solemnly, "and there is a spiritual body. . . . For this

corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." . . . . .

The young man tried to curb his imagination, to feel the significance of the fact before him in some other way than as it might affect his own material fate. His eyes rested on the great coffin with its load of cut flowers, and he thought of the silent face that lay therein, and wondered. But the state of death was inexplicable to him.

When the minister began his remarks about the dead man's personality, the tired people roused themselves and their wandering thoughts came back to their common earth. What could he say on this delicate theme? The subject was full of thorns! Powers Jackson had not been a bad man, take his life all in all, but he had been accused, justly, of some ruthless, selfish acts. He had forced his way, and he had not been nice about it. His private morality, also, had never quite satisfied the ideals of his neighbors, and he could not be called, in any sense of the word known to the officiating minister, a religious man.

Yet there was scarcely a person present to whom Powers Jackson had not done in the course of his life some kind and generous act. Each one in his heart knew the dead man to have been good and human, and forgave him his sins, public and private. What did it matter to old Jim Ryan, the office porter, who was standing in the corner with his son and grandson, whether Powers Jackson had or had not conspired with certain other men to secure illegally a large grant of Texas land! He and his

family had lived in the sun of the dead man's kindness. So it went with the others.

While the minister was saying what every one agreed to in his heart, — that their dead friend was a man of large stature, big in heart as in deed, strong for good as for evil, — his nephew's thoughts kept returning to that glowing, personal matter, — what did it all mean to *him?* Of course, his uncle had been good to him, had given him the best kind of an education and training in his profession; his mother's comfort and his own nurture were due to this uncle. But now the old man was about to give him the largest gift of all, — freedom for his whole lifetime, freedom to do with himself what he pleased, freedom first of all to leave this dull, dirty city, to flee to those other more sympathetic parts of the earth which he knew so well how to enjoy! . . .

The pretty widow in the chair beside him fidgeted. She was exceedingly uncomfortable in the close, stuffy room, and the minister's skilful words roused merely a wicked sense of irony in her. She could have told the reverend doctor a thing or two about old Powers! There were current in her set stories about the man which would not have tallied altogether with his appreciative remarks. She had seen him at close range, and he was a man, like the others. She threw back her jacket, revealing an attractive neck and bust. During the service she had already scanned the faces of most of those in the rooms, and, with great rapidity, had cast up mentally their score with the dead. This handsome young nephew was the only one of them all that counted in her own

estimation. What would he do with the old fellow's money? She threw a speculative, appreciative look at him.

Across the room the girl's face had settled into sober thought, the tears drying on her cheeks where they had fallen. With that glorious promise of Life Everlasting still reverberating in her soul, she felt that the only real Life which poor human beings might know was that life of the "spiritual body," the life of the good, which is all one and alike! To her, Powers Jackson was simply a good man, the best of men. For she had known him all her life, and had seen nothing but good in him. She loved him, and she knew that he could not be evil!

Finally, the minister rounded out his thought and came to the end of his remarks. The singers on the stairs began to chant softly, "Now, O Lord, let thy servant depart in peace!" And the tired faces of the mourners relaxed from their tense seriousness. Somehow, the crisis of their emotion had been reached and passed. Comforted and reassured, they were about to leave this house of mourning. An old man, childless, a widower of many years, who had done his work successfully in this world, and reaped the rewards of it, — what can any one feel for his death but a solemn sense of mystery and peace! Perhaps to one only, the girl hidden behind the lilies and the roses in the dining-room, was it a matter of keen, personal grief. He had left her world, — he who had stroked her head and kissed her, who had loved her as a father might love her, who had always smiled when she had touched him.

On the sidewalk outside the people gathered in little knots, speaking in subdued tones to one another, yet luxuriating in the riotous spring air. Then they moved away slowly. After the house was nearly emptied, those mourners who had been in the dining-room appeared, to take carriages for the cemetery. Mrs. Phillips came first, talking to young Jackson Hart. She was saying: —

"The service was beautiful. It was all quite what the dear old gentleman would have liked, and such good taste, — that was your part, I know!"

He murmured a protest to her compliment as he handed her into her carriage. She leaned toward him, with a very personal air: —

"It is so different from the last time we met! Do you remember? You must come and see me, soon. Don't forget!"

As the young man turned away from her, he met Helen Spellman descending the long flight of steps. The girl was carrying in her arms a great mass of loose flowers, and his cousin Everett who followed her was similarly burdened.

"Are you going on ahead of us?" Jackson asked anxiously.

"Yes. I want to put these flowers there first; so that it won't seem so bare and lonely when he comes. See! I have taken those he liked to have in his library, and yours and your mother's, too!"

She smiled over the flowers, but her eyes were still dull with tears. Again she brought his thoughts back

from self, from his futile, worldly preoccupations, back to her love for the dead man, which seemed so much greater, so much purer than his.

"That will be very nice," he said, taking the flowers from her hands and placing them in a carriage that had driven up to the curb. "I am sure he would have liked your thought for him. He was always so fond of what you did, of you!"

"Dear uncle," she murmured to herself.

Although the dead man was not connected with her by any ties of blood, she had grown into the habit of calling him uncle, first as a joke, then in affection.

"He always had me select the flowers when he wanted to give a really truly dinner!" she added, a smile coming to her face. "I know he will like to have me take these out to him there now."

She spoke of the dead in the present tense, with a strong feeling for the still living part of the one gone.

"I should like to drive out with you!" the young man exclaimed impulsively. "May I?"

"Oh, no! You mustn't," she replied quickly. "There's your mother, who is expecting you to go with her, and then," — she blushed and stepped away from him a little space, — "I had rather be alone, please!"

When the heavy gates of the vault in Rose Hill had closed upon Powers Jackson forever, the little group of intimate friends, who had come with him to his grave, descended silently the granite steps to their carriages. Insensibly a wave of relief stole over the spirit of the

young nephew, as he turned his back upon the ugly tomb, in the American-Greek style, with heavy capitals and squat pillars. It was not a selfish or heartless desire to get away from the dead man, to forget him now that he no longer counted in this world; it was merely the reaction from a day of gloom and sober thoughts. He felt stifled in his tall silk hat, long frock coat, patent-leather shoes, and black gloves. His spirit shrank from the chill of the tomb, to which the day had brought him near.

"Let's send all the women back together, Everett," he suggested to his cousin, "and then we can smoke. I am pretty nearly dead!"

As the three men of the party got into their carriage, Jackson took out his cigarette-case and offered it to his cousin; but Everett shook his head rather contemptuously and drew a cigar from his breast pocket.

"I never got in the habit of smoking those things," he remarked slowly. There was an implication in his cool tone that no grown man indulged himself in that boyish habit.

"*He* never liked cigarettes either, — wouldn't have one in the house," Jackson commented lightly.

The other man, Hollister, had taken one of Everett's cigars, and the three smoked in silence while the carriage bumped at a rapid pace over the uneven streets that led through the suburbs of Chicago. Hart wondered what the two men opposite him were thinking about. Hollister, so he reflected, must know what was in the will. He had been the old man's confidential business agent

for a good many years, and was one of the executors. Everett Wheeler, who was a lawyer with a large and very highly paid practice, was another.

Perhaps this second cousin of his was to get a good slice of the property after all, though his uncle had never displayed any great fondness for Everett. Yet the lawyer had always done the best that was expected of him. He had entered a Chicago law office from the high school in Michigan, preferring to skip the intermediate years of college training which Powers Jackson had offered him, and he never ceased referring to his success in his profession as partly due to the fact he had "fooled no time away at college." So far as his business went, which was to patch together crazy corporations, he had no immediate use for a liberal education. He had no tastes whatsoever outside of this business and a certain quiet interest in politics. His dull white features, sharpened to a vulpine point at the nose and chin, betrayed his temperament. He was a silent, cool-blooded, unpassionate American man of affairs, and it would be safe to say that he would die rich. Thus far he had not had enough emotion, apparently, to get married. No! his cousin reflected, Everett was not a man after Powers Jackson's heart! The old man was not cold, passionless. . . .

Those two men opposite him knew what was the fact in this matter so momentous to him. They smoked, wrapped in their own thoughts.

"I wonder who was the joker who put up that monstrous Greek temple out there in the cemetery?"

Jackson finally observed, in a nervous desire to say something.

"You mean the family mausó-leum?" Everett asked severely, removing his cigar from his lips and spitting carefully out of the half-opened window. "That was done by a fellow named Roly, and it was considered a very fine piece of work. It was built the time aunt Frankie died."

"It's a spooky sort of place to put a man into!"

"I think the funeral was what your uncle would have liked," Hollister remarked, as if to correct this irrelevant talk. "He hated to be eccentric, and yet he despised pretentious ceremonies. Everything was simple and dignified. The parson was good, too, in what he said. And the old men turned out in great numbers. I was glad of that! But I was surprised. It's nearly two years since he gave up the Works, and memories are short between master and man."

"That's a fact. But he knew every man Jack about the place in the old days," Everett observed, removing his silk hat as if it were an ornamental incumbrance.

"Yes," said Hollister, taking up the theme. "I remember how he would come into the front office on pay days, and stand behind the grating while the men were signing off. He could call every one by a first name. It was Pete and Dave and Jerry and Steve, — there wasn't so much of that European garbage, then, — these Hungarians and Slavs."

"But he was stiff with 'em in the strike, though," the lawyer put in, a smile wrinkling his thin, pallid lips. "He

fired every one who went out with the union, — never'd let 'em back, no matter what they said or did. Those there to-day were mostly the old ones that didn't strike."

The two older men began to exchange stories about the dead man, of things they had seen while they were working for him, — his tricks of temper, whims of mind. Hollister spoke gently, almost tenderly, of the one he had worked with, as of one whose faults were flaws in a great stone. The lawyer spoke literally, impassively, as of some phenomenon of nature which he had seen often and had thoroughly observed.

Young Hart lit another cigarette, and as he listened to the stories he thought of the girl's face just as he had seen it that day, utterly moved and transfixed with a strange emotion of tender sorrow that was half happiness. The expression puzzled him, and he ended by saying to himself that she was religious, meaning by that word that she was moved by certain feelings other than those which affected him or Everett or his mother even. And this new thought of her made her more precious in his eyes. He looked for her when they reached the sombre old house on Ohio Street, but she had already gone home.

As Hollister was leaving the house, he said to the young man: —

"Can you come over to Wheeler's office to-morrow about four? Judge Phillips will be there, the other executor. We are to open the will. They have suggested that I ask you to join us," he added hastily, with an effort to be matter of fact.

"All right, Hollister," the young man answered, with an equal effort to appear unconcerned. "I'll be over!"

But his heart thumped strangely.

CHAPTER II

"GET all ready before you start," Powers Jackson had said, when his nephew, after four years at Cornell and three years at a famous technical school in the East, had suggested the propriety of finishing his professional training in architecture by additional study in Paris. "Get all ready, — then let us have results."

He had taken his time to get ready. He had chosen to go to Cornell in the first place rather than to a larger university, because some of the boys of his high school class were going there. With us in America such matters are often settled in this childish way. The reason why he chose the profession of architecture was, apparently, scarcely less frivolous. A "fraternity brother" at Cornell, just home from Paris, fired the college boy's imagination for "the Quarter." But, once started in the course of architecture at the technical school, he found that he had stumbled into something which really interested him. For the first time in his life he worked seriously.

At the Beaux Arts he worked, also, though he did not forget the amenities of life. The two years first talked of expanded into two and a half, then rounded to a full three. Meanwhile the generous checks from the office

of the Bridge Works came with pleasant regularity. His mother wrote, "Powers hopes that you are deriving benefit from your studies in Paris." What the old man had said was, "How's Jackie doing these days, Amelia?" And young Hart was "doing" well. There were many benefits, not always orthodox, which the young American, established cosily on the Rue de l'Université, was deriving from Paris.

The day of preparation came to an end, however. During those last weeks of his stay in Europe he was joined by his mother and Helen Spellman. Powers Jackson had taken this occasion to send them both abroad; Mrs. Spellman being too much of an invalid to take the journey, Mrs. Amelia Hart had been very glad to have the girl's companionship. Jackson met them in Naples. After he had kissed his mother and taken her handbag, to which she was clinging in miserable suspicion of the entire foreign world, he turned to the girl, whose presence he had been conscious of all the time. Helen was not noticeably pretty or well dressed; but she had an air of race, a fineness of feature, a certain personal delicacy, to which the young man had long been unaccustomed. Perhaps three years of student life in Paris had prepared him to think very well of a young American woman.

They had spent most of their time in Rome, where Mrs. Hart could be made happy with many American comforts. She was much given to writing letters to her friends; they formed a kind of journal wherein she recorded her impressions of the places she visited and

the facts she culled from the guide-books and the *valets de place* whom they employed. She wrote a round, firm hand, and this was her style of entry: —

"This morning with Helen and Jackson to the Palatine Hill. The Palatine was one of the Seven Hills of Rome. It was anciently the home of the Cæsars. That is, they had their palaces there, some remains of which exist to this day. . . . It is a pretty sort of place now, where there are stone benches, from which may be obtained a good view of the Forum and the best ruins of Ancient Rome."

Jackson liked to tease his mother about her literal method of sight-seeing. In her way, also, Helen was laborious and conscientious, trying to solve the complex impressions of the foreign world. The young architect was content to wave his hand toward a mass of picturesque ruins as they flitted past in a cab. "Somebody or other Metellus put up that arch," he would remark gayly. "Good color, isn't it?" The women would insist upon stopping the cab, and would get out. Then, guide-book in hand, they would peer up at the gray remnant of an ancient order of things. So with the Palatine, — Helen insisted upon studying out on the plan the House of Livia, and puzzled much over the exact situation of the Golden House of Nero, although Jackson assured her that no remains of the huge palace could be identified. She had a conscience about seeing as much as she could, and seeing it honestly, justifying to herself the careless architect's flippancy on the ground that he had been so long in Europe he knew what to avoid.

While Mrs. Hart was laboriously filling her letters with incontestable facts, the two young people went about alone, in that perfectly normal and healthy manner which remains an everlasting puzzle to the European eye. The architect took keen pleasure in teaching the girl to recognize the beauty in a Palladian façade and the majestic grandiosity of a Santa Maria degli Angeli. In matters of color and line the girl was as sensitive as he, but he found that she lacked the masculine sense of construction, the builder's instinct for proportion and plan.

Their friendship was quite simple, untouched by any hectic excitement, or even sentiment. The architect was twenty-seven years old, and he had seen enough of Parisian manners to remove any superficial virtue which might have survived his four years at Cornell. But this American girl, the old friend of his family, his mother's companion — she seemed to him merely the pleasantest being he had seen in months.

So their six weeks in Italy had been very happy ones for all three, — six golden weeks of May and early June, when the beautiful land smiled at them from every field and wall. Each fresh scene in the panorama of their little journeys was another joy, a new excitement that brought a flush of heightened color to the girl's face. One of their last days they spent at the little village of Ravello, on the hilltop above Amalfi, and there in the clear twilight of a warm June day, with gold-tipped clouds brooding over the Bay of Salerno, they came for the first time upon the personal note. They were leaning over

the railing of the terrace in the Palumbo, listening to the bells in the churches of Vetri below them.

"Wouldn't this be good for always!" he murmured.

He was touched with sentimental self-pity at the thought of leaving all this,—the beauty, the wonder, the joy of Europe! In another short month instead of these golden hours of full sensation there would be Chicago, whose harsh picture a three years' absence had not softened.

"I don't know," the girl replied, with a long sigh for remembered joy. "One could not be as happy as this for months and years."

"I'd like to try!" he said lightly.

"No! Not you!" she retorted with sudden warmth. "What could a man do here?"

"There are a lot of fellows in Europe who manage to answer that question somehow. Most of the men I knew in Paris don't expect to go back yet, and not to Chicago anyway."

Her lips compressed quickly. Evidently they were not the kind of men she thought well of.

"Why!" she stammered, words crowding tempestuously to her tongue. "How could you stay, and not work out your own life, not make your own place in the world like uncle Powers? How it would trouble him to hear you say that!"

She made him a trifle ashamed of his desire to keep out of the fight any longer. Hers, he judged, was a militant, ambitious nature, and he was quick to feel what she expected of him.

After they had sat there a long time without speaking, she said gently, as if she wished to be just to him: —

"It might be different, if one were an artist; but even then I should think a man would want to carry back what he had received here to the place he was born in, — shouldn't you?"

"Well, perhaps," he admitted, "if the place weren't just — Chicago! It wouldn't seem much use to carry *this* back there The best thing for a man would be to forget it," he concluded rather bitterly.

They never came back to this topic. Nevertheless those simple words which the girl had spoken in that garden of Ravello became a tonic for him at other moments of shrinking or regret. He felt what was in her eyes a man's part.

They made the long voyage homewards through the Mediterranean, touching at Gibraltar for a last, faint glimpse of romance. It was a placid journey in a slow steamer, with a small company of dull, middle-aged Americans, and the two young people were left much to themselves. In the isolation of the sunny, windless sea, their acquaintance took on imperceptibly a personal character. After the fashion of the egotistic male, he told her, bit by bit, all that he knew about himself, — his college days, his friends, and his work at the Beaux Arts. From the past, — his past, — they slid to the future that lay before him on the other shore of the Atlantic. He sketched for her in colored words the ideals of his majes-

tic art. Tucked up on deck those long, cloudless nights, they reached the higher themes, — what a man could do, as Richardson and Atwood had shown the glorious way, toward expressing the character and spirit of a fresh race in brick and stone and steel!

Such thoughts as these touched the girl's imagination, just as the sweet fragments of a civilization finer than ours had stirred her heart in Italy. All these ideas which the young man poured forth, she took to be the architect's original possessions, not being familiar with the froth of Paris studios, the wisdom of long *déjeuners*. And she was doubly eager whenever he mentioned his plans for the future. For something earnest and large was the first craving of her soul, something that had in it service and beauty in life.

At the time of the great exposition in Chicago she had had such matters first brought to her attention. Powers Jackson, as one of the directors of the enterprise, had entertained many of the artists and distinguished men who came to the city, and at his dinner-table she had heard men talk whose vital ideals were being worked into the beautiful buildings beside the lake. Their words she had hoarded in her schoolgirl's memory, and now in her sympathy for the young architect she began to see what could be done with an awakened feeling for art, for social life, to make our strong young cities memorable. This, she imagined shyly, would be the work of the man beside her!

He was handsome and strong, vigorously built, though inclined to heaviness of body. His brown hair waved

under his straw hat, and a thick mustache turned stiffly upwards in the style of the German Emperor, which was then just coming into fashion. This method of wearing the mustache, and also a habit of dressing rather too well, troubled the girl; for she knew that uncle Powers would at once note such trivial aspects of his nephew. The keen old man might say nothing, but he would think contemptuous thoughts. The young architect's complexion was ruddy, healthily bronzed; his features were regular and large, as a man's should be. Altogether he was a handsome, alert, modern American. Too handsome, perhaps! She thought apprehensively of the rough-looking, rude old man at home, his face tanned and beaten, knobby and hard, like the gnarled stump of an oak!

She was very anxious that the architect should make a good impression on his uncle, not simply for his own sake, but for the lonely old man's comfort. She felt that she knew Powers Jackson better than his nephew did; knew what he liked and what he despised. She wanted him to love this nephew, and several times she talked to Jackson about his uncle. The young man listened with an amused smile, as if he had already a good formula for the old man.

"Mother can't get him out of that brick Mansard roost on Ohio Street, where he has lived since the fire. All his friends have moved away from the neighborhood. But he thinks the black-walnut rooms, the stamped leather on the walls, and the rest of it, is the best going yet. That buffet, as he calls it! It's early Victorian, a regular *chef-d'œuvre* of ugliness. That house!"

"It's always been his home," she protested, finding something trivial in this comic emphasis on sideboards and bookcases. "He cares about good things too. Lately he's taken to buying engravings. Mr. Pemberton interested him in them. And I think he would like to buy pictures, if he wasn't afraid of being cheated, of making a fool of himself."

"You'll make him out a patron of the fine arts!"

Jackson laughed merrily at the picture of Powers Jackson as a connoisseur in art.

"Perhaps he will be yet!" she retorted stoutly. "At any rate, he is a very dear old man."

He would not have described his uncle Powers in the same simple words. Still he had the kindest feelings toward him, mixed with a latent anxiety as to what the old man might do about his allowance, now that his school days had come definitely to a close. . . .

Thus in the long hours of that voyage, with the sound of the gurgling, dripping water all about them, soothed by the rhythm of pounding engines, the man and the woman came to a sort of knowledge of each other. At least there was created in the heart of each a vision of the other. The girl's vision was glorified by the warmth of her imagination, which transformed all her simple experiences. In her heart, if she had looked there, she would have seen an image of youth and power, very handsome, with great masculine hopes, and aspirations after unwrought deeds. Unconsciously she had given to that image something which she could never take back all the years of her life, let her marry whom she might!

And he could remember her, if hereafter he should come to love her, as she was these last days. The shadow of the end of the romance was upon her, and it left her subdued, pensive, but more lovely than ever before. To the artist's eye in the architect her head was too large, the brow not smooth enough, the hair two shades too dark, the full face too broad. The blue eyes and the trembling, small mouth gave a certain childishness to her expression that the young man could not understand. It was only when she spoke that he was much moved; for her voice was very sweet, uncertain in its accents, tremulous. She seemed to breathe into commonplace words some revelation of herself. . . .

On the morning of their arrival the lofty buildings of the great city loomed through the mist. The architect said: —

"There are the hills of the New World! Here endeth the first chapter."

"I cannot believe it has ended," she replied slowly. "Nothing ends!"

Powers Jackson and Mrs. Spellman met the travellers in New York. It was just at the time that Jackson was negotiating with the promoters of a large trust for the sale of his Bridge Works. This fact his nephew did not learn until some months later, for the old man never talked about his deeds and intentions. At any rate, he did sell the Works one morning in the lobby of his hotel and for his own price, which was an outrageous one, as

the stockholders of the new trust came to know in time to their chagrin.

He shook hands with his sister, kissed Helen on the forehead, and nodded to his nephew.

"How's the Pope, Amelia?" he asked gravely.

"You needn't ask me! Did you think, Powers, I'd be one to go over to the Vatican and kiss that old man's hand? I hope I'm too good a Christian to do that!"

"Oh, don't be too hard on the poor feller," Jackson said, continuing his joke. "I hoped you'd pay your respects to the Pope. Why, he's the smartest one in the whole bunch over there, I guess!"

He looked to Helen for sympathy. It should be said that Powers Jackson regarded his sister Amelia as a fool, but that he never allowed himself to take advantage of the fact except in such trifling ways as this.

When the two men were alone in the private parlor at the hotel, the uncle said: —

"So you've finished up now? You're all through over there?"

"Yes, sir," Hart answered, not feeling quite at his ease with this calm old man. "I guess I am ready to begin building, as soon as any one will have me!"

"I see there's plenty doing in your line, all over."

"I am glad to hear that."

The architect fidgeted before he could think what to say next. Then he managed to express his sense of gratitude for the great opportunities his uncle had given him in Paris. Jackson listened, but said nothing. The architect was conscious that the old man had taken in

with one sweep of those sharp little eyes his complete appearance. He suspected that the part in the middle of his brown hair, the pert lift to the ends of his mustache, the soft stock about his neck, the lavender colored silk shirt in which he had prepared to meet the pitiless glare of the June sun in the city, — that all these items had been noted and disapproved. He reflected somewhat resentfully that he was not obliged to make a guy of himself to please his uncle. He found his uncle's clothes very bad. Powers Jackson was a large man, and his clothes, though made by one of the best tailors in Chicago, usually had a draggled appearance, as if he had forgotten to take them off when he went to bed. However, when the old man next spoke, he made no reference to his nephew's attire.

"I was talking to Wright about you the other day. Ever heard of him?"

"Of Walker, Post, and Wright?" Hart asked, naming one of the best-known firms of architects in the country.

"Yes. They've been doing something for me lately. If you haven't made any plans, you might start in their Chicago office. That'll teach you the ropes over here."

Nothing was said about an allowance or a continuation of those generous and gratefully acknowledged checks which had made life at Cornell and at Paris so joyous. And nothing more was ever said about them! Jackson Hart had taken the position that his uncle had secured for him in Wright's Chicago office, and within a fortnight of the day he landed at New York he was making

his daily pilgrimage to the twelfth floor of the Maramanoc Building, where under the bulkheads worked a company of young gentlemen in their shirt-sleeves.

That was two years ago, and by this time he was eager for almost any kind of change.

CHAPTER III

The morning after the funeral Francis Jackson Hart resumed his work on the plans of a large hotel that Walker, Post, and Wright were to build in Denver. This was in all probability the last piece of work that he should be called upon to do for that firm, and the thought was pleasant to him. He had not spent an altogether happy two years in that office. It was a large firm, with other offices in St. Paul and New York, and work under construction in a dozen different states. Wright was the only member of the firm who came often to Chicago; he dropped into the office nearly every month, arriving from somewhere south or east, and bound for somewhere north or west, with only a few days to spare. During these brief visits he was always tremendously rushed — plans under way in the office had to be looked over and criticised; the construction in the immediate neighborhood examined; new business to be discussed with the firm's clients, and much else. He was a tall, thin man, with harassed, near-sighted eyes, — a gentleman well trained in his profession and having good taste according to the standards of a generation ago. But he had fallen upon a commercial age, and had not been large enough to sway it. He made decent com-

promises between his own taste and that of his clients, and took pride in the honest construction of his buildings.

Wright had hurt Hart's susceptibilities almost at the start, when he remarked about a sketch that the young architect had made for a new telephone exchange: —

"All you want, my boy, is the figure of a good fat woman flopping over that door!"

For the next few months Hart had been kept busy drawing spandrels. From this he was promoted to designing stables for country houses of rich clients. He resented the implied criticism of his judgment, and he put Wright down as a mere Philistine, who had got all his training in an American office.

Now, he said to himself, as he took down his street coat and adjusted his cuffs before going over to his cousin's office to hear the will, he should leave Wright's "department store," and "show the old man" what he thought of the kind of buildings the firm was putting up for rich and common people. He, at least, would not be obliged to be mercenary. His two years' experience in Chicago had taught him something about the fierceness of the struggle to exist in one of the professions, especially in a profession where there is an element of fine art. And his appetite to succeed, to be some one of note in this hurly-burly of Chicago, had grown very fast. For he had found himself less of a person in his native city than he had thought it possible over in Paris, — even with the help of his rich uncle, with whom he had continued to live.

So, as the elevator of the Dearborn Building bore him upwards that afternoon, his heart beat exultantly: he was to hear in a few moments the full measure of that advantage which he had been given over all the toiling, sweating humanity here in the elevator, out there on the street! By the right of fortunate birth he was to be spared the common lot of man, to be placed high up on the long, long ladder of human fate. . . .

When he entered Everett Wheeler's private office, Hollister was talking with Judge Phillips. The latter nodded pleasantly to the young man, and gave him his hand.

"How do you *do*, sir?" he asked, with emphatic gravity.

The judge, who had not sat in a court for more than a generation, was a vigorous, elderly man with a sweeping gray mustache. He was an old resident of Chicago, and had made much money, some of it in Powers Jackson's enterprises.

Hollister nodded briskly to the architect, and motioned him to a seat. Presently Everett came in from the safe where he had gone to get some papers, and Hollister, who seemed to be spokesman for the executors, clearing his throat, began: —

"Well, gentlemen, we all know what we are here for, I presume."

The young architect never remembered clearly how all the rest of it came about. At first he wondered why old Hollister should open the proceedings with such

elaborate eulogies of the dead man. Hollister kept saying that few men had understood the real man in Powers Jackson, — the warm man's heart that beat beneath the rude and silent manner.

"I want to say," Hollister exclaimed in a burst of unwonted emotion, "that it was more than mutual interest which allied the judge and me to Mr. Jackson. It was admiration! Admiration for the man!"

The judge punctuated this opinion with a grave nod.

"Especially these latter years, when Mr. Jackson was searching for a way in which he might most benefit the world with the fortune that he had earned by his ability and hard work."

The gray-bearded man ceased talking for a moment and looked at the two younger men. Everett was paring his nails, very neatly, with the air of detachment he assumed when he was engaged in taking a deposition. The architect looked blankly mystified.

"He wanted to help men," Hollister resumed less demonstratively. "Especially workingmen, the kind of men he had come from and had known all his life. He never forgot that he worked at the forge the first five years he lived in Chicago. And no matter what the labor unions say, or the cheap newspaper writers, there wasn't a man in this city who cared for the best interests of laboring men more than Powers Jackson."

Across the judge's handsome face flitted the glimmer of a smile, as if other memories, slightly contradictory, would intrude themselves on this eulogy. Everett, having finished the cutting of his nails, was examining his

shoes. He might be thinking of the price of steel billets in Liverpool, or he might be thinking that Hollister was an ass, — no one could tell.

"He took much advice; he consulted many men, among them the president of a great Eastern university. And here in this document" — Hollister took up the will — "he embodied the results, — his purpose!"

At this point in the architect's confused memory of the fateful scene there was a red spot of consciousness. The man of affairs, looking straight at him, seemingly, announced: —

"Powers Jackson left the bulk of his large fortune in trust with the purpose of founding a great school for the children of workingmen!"

There ensued a brief pause. Hart did not comprehend at once the full significance of what had been said. But as the others made no remark, he did not venture to ask questions, and so Hollister asked the lawyer to read the will, clause by clause.

It was a brief document, considering the importance of its contents. There was an item, Jackson recalled afterward, leaving the old family farm at Vernon Falls in Vermont to "my dear young friend, Helen Powers Spellman, because she will love it for my sake as well as for itself." And to this bequest was added a few thousand dollars as a maintenance fund.

He might have treated her more generously, it occurred to the architect vaguely, valuing in his own mind the old place as naught.

"To my nephew, Francis Jackson Hart, ten thousand dollars in the following securities. . . ."

This he grasped immediately. So, *that* was his figure! He scarcely noted the next clause, which gave to his mother the Ohio Street house with a liberal income from the estate for her life. He waited for the larger bequests which must come, and for the disposition of the residue. Suddenly Hollister remarked with a little upward inflection of satisfaction: —

"Now we are coming to the core of the apple!"

Slowly, deliberately, the lawyer read on: —

"Being desirous that the larger part of whatever wealth I may die possessed of may be made of immediate and wide benefit to mankind, I do give and bequeath the residue of my estate to Judge Harrison Phillips, Everett Wheeler, and Mark Kingsford Hollister, and such others as they may associate with them, in trust, nevertheless, for the following described purposes. . . . Said fund and its accumulations to be devoted to the founding and maintenance of a school or institution for the purpose of providing an education, industrial and technical, as said trustees may deem best, for the children of workingmen, of the city of Chicago."

"That," exclaimed Hollister triumphantly, "is Powers Jackson's gift to mankind!"

There were a few more sentences to the will, elaborating slightly the donor's design, providing for liberal payments to the executors for their services, and reserving certain portions of the estate for endowment purposes only. Yet, as a whole, the document was singularly

simple, almost bare in its disposition of a very large amount of money. It reposed a great trust in the men selected to carry out the design, in their will and intelligence. Doubtless the old man had taken Hollister, at least, into his confidence, and had contented himself with giving him verbal and general directions, knowing full well the fate of elaborately conceived and legally specified bequests. The wise old man seemed to have contented himself with outlining broadly, though plainly enough, his large intention.

"That's a pretty shaky piece of work, that instrument," Everett observed, narrowing his eyes to a thin slit. "He didn't get me to draw it up, let me tell you. It's queer the old man was willing to trust his pile to such a loosely worded document."

"Fortunately," Judge Phillips hastened to add, "in this case we may hope that will make no difference."

There was an awkward pause, and then the lawyer replied drawlingly: —

"No, I don't suppose there'll be any trouble. I don't see why there should be any, unless Hart objects."

Jackson felt dimly that here was his chance to protest, to object to Everett's calm acceptance of the will. But a certain shame, or diffidence, restrained him at the moment from showing these men that he felt injured by his uncle's will. He said nothing, and Hollister began to talk of the projected school. It was to be something new, the architect gathered, not exactly like any other attempt in education in our country, and it would take time to perfect the details of the plan. There was no need for haste.

"We must build for generations when we do start," Hollister said. "And the other trustees agree with me that this is not the most opportune time for converting the estate into ready money."

"It will pretty nearly double the next five years," the judge observed authoritatively.

"At the present, as closely as we can estimate it, there is available for the purposes of the trust a little over three millions of dollars," Hollister stated.

Over three millions! Jackson Hart started in his chair. He had had no idea that his uncle was worth anything like that amount. And these shrewd men thought it would probably double during the next five years! Well, so far as he was concerned it might be three cents. Possibly Everett would get a few dollars out of it as trustee. He had already shared in some of the old man's plums, Hart reflected bitterly. When the trustees began to discuss among themselves some detail of the management of the real estate involved, the young architect made an excuse of a business engagement and slipped away. Just as he reached the door, Everett called out: —

"We'll send the will over for probate to-morrow. If there's no hitch, the legacies will be paid at once. I'll be over to see your mother very soon and arrange for the payment of her annuity."

Jackson nodded. He did not like to trust his voice. He knew that it was very dry. Somehow he found himself in the elevator herded in a cage of office boys and clerks on their way home, sweating and dirty from a long day's work. At the street level he bought a newspaper,

and the first thing that caught his eye in its damp folds were the headlines: —

JACKSON'S MILLIONS GO TO EDUCATION

THE STEEL MAGNATE'S MONEY WILL FOUND INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL

Hart crumpled up the sheet and threw it into the gutter. The first intelligible feeling that he had over his situation was a sort of shame that his uncle should have held him so cheap. For so he interpreted the gift of ten thousand dollars! And he began, unconsciously, to try in his mind the case between himself and his uncle. He had always been led to believe that he was the most favored of all the old man's dependents. Surely he had been treated like a son, and he was not aware that he had ever been ungrateful or unworthy. Now, without having committed any piece of public folly, he was made a thing of pity and contempt before his friends!

He resented the old man's kindness, now that he knew where it ended. Very swiftly he began to realize what it would mean to him to be without this fortune on which he had so confidently calculated. He had made up his mind to move to New York, where some of his friends had started prosperously and had invited him to join them. And there was Helen, whom he had come to love in the past year. Marriage was now, apparently, out of the question for him, unless he could earn more money than Wright thought he was worth. For Helen no more than he had been favored by his uncle. Even

Helen, whom the old man had made so much of, had been left with little more than a stony farm! . . .

Thus he ploughed his way down the murky street in the direction of the north side bridge. The gloom of a foggy spring evening was added to the smoke and grime of the careless city. The architect felt dirty and uncomfortable, and he knew now that he was condemned to struggle on in this unlovely metropolis, where even the baked meats of life were flung at one ungarnished.

Two solid streams of black-dressed humanity were pressing northward over the narrow footpaths of the State Street bridge. Some unit in the throng nudged the architect's elbow.

"Hello, Jack Hart!" a man yelped at him, scowling from under his black pot hat. "Going my way?"

Jackson grumbled a short assent. He did not care to meet Sayre Coburn at this juncture in his life. Coburn had been a half-starved medical student at Cornell, working his way as a janitor in the chemical laboratory. He had been obliged to drop out before the struggle was quite over, and had gone somewhere else to finish his medical work. Lately he had landed in Chicago and opened an office without knowing a soul in the city beyond the architect and a few other Cornell men, whom he had not sought out.

Hart knew that the doctor walked to save car fare, and subsisted on meal tickets at indifferent restaurants. When he had met the man before he had been inclined to patronize him. Now he looked at the dirty collar, the frayed and baggy trousers, the wolfish hunch to the

shoulders, and he knew instinctively that these marks came from the fight in its elementary form, — from that beast-tussle to snatch a dollar that some other man wants to get from you!

That same hard game, to which his uncle had just condemned him, gave Coburn his bad manners, his hit-you-in-the-face style of address, his vulgar, yelping speech. He suspected that Coburn had gone without clothes and tobacco to feed a lot of guinea-pigs and rabbits on which he was making experiments. But Dr. Coburn told you all that in his harsh, boring voice, just as he told you that your right shoulder was dragging, or your left leg was short, or any other disagreeable fact.

"So the old man's money goes to start a school?" Coburn asked, his firm lips wreathing into a slight grin. "That rather cuts you out, don't it? Or, maybe, you and he had some kind of a deal so that all the money don't have to be assessed for inheritance taxes? That's the usual way nowadays."

"There's no arrangement," Hart answered shortly. "I had no claim on my uncle's money."

The smiling doctor looked at him sideways for a moment, examining the man drolly, without malice.

"Well, you wouldn't have turned it down, if it had been passed up to you on a silver dish? Hey? God, I'd like to get a show at some loose cash. Then I could build a first-class laboratory and keep all the animals I want, instead of slopping around here selling pills and guff to old women! But these philanthropic millionnaires don't seem to favor medicine much."

He thrust out his heavy under lip at the world in a brutal, defiant manner, and swung his little black bag as though he would like to brain some rich passer-by. His was a handsome face, with firm, straight lines, a thick black mustache, and clear eyes, deep set. But it was a face torn and macerated by the hunger of unappeased desires,— unselfish and honorable desires, however; a face that thinly covered a fuming crater beneath. When life treated this man rudely, he would fight back, and he would win against odds. But as the architect saw him, he was a tough, unlovely specimen.

"I suppose any one would like to have money," Hart answered vaguely. Then feeling that the doctor's company was intolerable, he turned down a side street, calling out, "So long, Coburn."

The doctor's face betrayed a not wholly sympathetic amusement when his companion left him in this abrupt manner.

When Jackson entered the house, his uncle's old home, his mother was sitting by the library table reading, just as she had sat and read at this hour for the past twenty years. Powers Jackson had carefully made such provision for her as would enable her to continue this habit as long as she might live. She called to her son: —

"You're late, son. Supper's on the table."

"Don't wait for me," he answered dully, going upstairs to his room.

When he joined his mother at the supper-table, his mustache was brushed upwards in a confident wave, and

his face, though serious, was not blackened by soot and care.

"Did you see Everett?" Mrs. Hart asked suggestively.

Jackson told her in a few words the event of the afternoon, recounting the chief provisions of the will as he remembered them. For some moments she said nothing. Then she remarked, with a note of annoyance in her voice: —

"Powers was always bound I sh'd never leave this house except to follow him to Rose Hill. And he's fixed it so now I can't! I could never make him see how sooty it was here. We have to wash the curtains and things once a fortnight, and then they ain't fit to be seen half the time."

Her son, who thought that he had his own grievances against his uncle, made no reply to this complaint. Before they had finished their meal, Mrs. Hart added: —

"He might have done more for you, too, seeing what a sight of money he left."

"Yes, he might have done it! But you see he didn't choose to. And I guess the best thing we can do under the circumstances is to say as little as possible about the will. That is, unless we decide to fight it."

He threw this out tentatively. It had not occurred to him to contest the will until that moment. Then he thought suddenly, "Why should I stand it?"

But Mrs. Hart, who had never opposed her brother in all her life, exclaimed: —

"You couldn't do that, Jackson! I am sure Powers wouldn't like it."

"Probably not," the young man replied ironically. "But it isn't his money any longer!"

It occurred to him soon, however, that by this act he would endanger his mother's comfortable inheritance, besides estranging his cousin Everett and all the old man's friends. To contest the will would be a risk and, moreover, would be ungrateful, petty. It was a matter at any rate upon which he should have to take the best of advice. When he spoke again at the end of their supper, he said impartially: —

"I am glad you are comfortably looked out for, though I hope I should always be able to give you a home, anyway. And we must remember that uncle gave me my education and my three years in Paris, and I suppose that after that he thought ten thousand dollars was all that I was worth, — or could take care of."

He said this, standing in front of the heavy black-walnut sideboard which he abhorred, while he lit a cigarette. As he spoke he felt that he was taking his injury in a manly way, although he still reserved to himself the right to seek relief from the courts.

And in the deeper reaches of his being there lay a bitter sense of resentment, a desire to make the world pay him in some manner for his disappointment. If he had to, he would show people that he could make his own way; that he was more than the weakling his uncle had contemptuously overlooked in the disposal of his property. He should rise in his profession, make money, and prove to the world that he could swim without Powers Jackson's millions.

Oddly enough, as he stood there smoking, his eyes narrowed, his handsome face hardened into something like the stocky doctor's bull-dog expression. The rough, brute man in him thrust itself to the surface!

"What kind of a school are they going to start with all that money?" Mrs. Hart asked, as she seated herself for the evening.

"Oh, something technical. For sons of mechanics, a kind of mechanics' institute, I should say."

He thought of some of the old man's caustic remarks about charities, and added:—

"Wanted to make good before he quit, I suppose?"

"Will you have to stay on with that firm?" Mrs. Hart asked, taking up Lanciani's "Pagan and Christian Rome."

"I suppose I'll have to for a time," answered Jackson, gloomily. . . .

Thus these two accepted the dead man's will. Powers Jackson had come to his decision after long deliberation, judging that toward all who might have claims of any kind upon him he had acted justly and generously. He had studied these people about him for a long time. With Everett, who was only distantly related to him, he had acquitted himself years before, when he had put it in the young man's way to make money in his profession, to kill his prey for himself. Jackson, he deemed, would get most out of the fight of life by making the struggle, as he had made it himself, unaided. As for Helen, he had given the girl what was most intimately

his, and what would do her the least harm by attracting to her the attention of the unscrupulous world. There remained what might be called his general account with the world, and at the end he had sought to settle this, the largest of all.

Powers Jackson had not been a good man, as has been hinted, but that he took his responsibilities to heart and struggled to meet them there can be no doubt. Whether or not he had chosen the best way to settle this account with the world, by trying to help those to live who were unfavored by birth, cannot be easily answered. Conceiving it to be his inalienable right to do with his money what he would, after death as in life, he had tried to do something large and wise with it. Thus far, he had succeeded in embittering his nephew.

CHAPTER IV

The next morning Jackson Hart was once more bending over the large sheets of the plans for the Denver hotel. Now that he knew his fate, the draughting-room under the great skylights of the Maramanoc Building seemed like a prison indeed. The men in the office, he felt sure, had read all about the will, and had had their say upon his private affairs before he had come in. He could tell that from the additional nonchalance in the manner of the head draughtsman, Cook, when he nodded to him on his way to the cubby-hole where he worked. Early in the afternoon a welcome interruption came to him in the shape of an urgent call from the electricians working on the Canostota apartment house on the South Side. The head of the office asked Hart to go to the Canostota and straighten the men out, as Harmon, their engineer, was at home ill.

As Jackson crossed the street to take the elevated train he met his cousin. They walked together to the station, and as Wheeler was turning away, the architect broke out: —

"I've been thinking over uncle's will. I can't say I think it was fair, — to treat me like that after — after all these years."

The lawyer smiled coldly.

"I didn't get much, either," he remarked.

"Well, that don't make it any better; besides, you have had as good as money from him long ago. Your position and mine aren't just the same."

"No, that's so," the lawyer admitted. "But what are you going to do about it?"

"I don't know yet. I want to think it over. How long"—he hesitated before finishing his thought.

"How long have you to give notice you want to contest? About three weeks," Wheeler replied coolly. "Of course you know that if you fight you'll put your mother's legacy in danger. And I rather guess Hollister and the judge wouldn't compromise."

"And you?"

Wheeler shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, I suppose I should stick with the others."

Then Wheeler nodded and was off down the street. He did not appear to be surprised or disturbed by what his cousin had told him. Hart, pondering the matter in perplexity, continued on his way to the Canostota. There he found the foreman for the electrical contractor, and spent a busy hour explaining to the man the intricacies of the office blue prints. Then the steam-fitter got hold of him, and it was nearly five o'clock before he had time to think of himself or his own affairs. As he emerged from the basement by a hole left in the floor for the plumbers and steam-fitters to run their pipes through, he noticed a space where a section of the fireproof partition had been accidentally knocked out. Through this hole he could

see one of the steel I-beams that supported the flooring above, where it had been drilled to admit the passing of a steam pipe. Something unusual in the appearance of the metal caught his eye, and he paused where he was, halfway out of the basement, to look at it again. The I-beam seemed unaccountably thin and slight. He felt in his pocket for a small rule that he usually carried with him. He was not quite familiar, even yet, with the material side of building in America; but he knew in a general way the weights and thicknesses of steel beams that were ordinarily specified in Wright's office for buildings of this size.

"How's this, Davidson?" he asked the steam-fitter, who was close at his heels. "Isn't that a pretty light fifteen-inch I-beam?"

The workman looked absolutely blank.

"I dunno. I expect it's what's called for."

Even if the man had known that something was wrong about the steel, he would have said nothing. It was silly to ask a subcontractor to give evidence damaging to his employer. The architect stooped and asked the man to hand him his calipers. As he was trying to measure the section of steel, he saw a man's face looking down at him from the floor above. Presently a burly form appeared in the opening, and Jackson recognized Graves, who was the general contractor for the building.

"We haven't begun to patch up the tile yet," the contractor observed, nodding to the architect. "We thought we'd leave it open here and there until Mr. Harmon could get around and look into things. I'm expecting

Mr. Wright will be out here the first of the week, too."

The contractor talked slowly, without taking his eyes from Hart. He was a large, full-bearded man, with a manner self-confident or assuming, as one chose to take it. Hart was always at a loss how to treat a man like Graves, — whether as a kind of upper workman to be ordered about, or as a social equal.

"Is that so?" he asked in a non-committal tone. "Mr. Harmon hasn't been out here much of late?"

"No, sir. It must be three weeks or more since Mr. Harmon was here last. He's been sick that long, ain't he?"

The steam-fitter had slipped away. Hart had it on his lips to ask the contractor to show him the specifications for the steel work, but he was not sure that this was the proper method of procedure. Graves kept his cool gray eyes fastened on the young architect, while he said: —

"That's why I've been keeping things back, so as Mr. Wright could satisfy himself that everything was all right. A terribly particular man, that Mr. Wright. If you can please him!"

He was studying the young man before him, and very ably supplying answers to the architect's doubts before he could express them. The contractor did not pause to give Hart time to think, but kept his stream of slow, confident words flowing over the architect.

"You fellows give us a lot of bother. Now take that tile. Mr. Wright specifies Caper's A 1, which happens to be out of the market just now. To please him I sent to

Cleveland and Buffalo for some odds and ends they had down there. But there are a dozen makes just as good!"

He spoke like a man who did always a little more than his duty. Although the architect was conscious of the skilful manner in which his attention was being switched from the steel beams, he felt inclined to trust the man and judged his suspicions to be ill-timed.

Graves was not one of the larger contractors employed on the firm's buildings. He had worked up from small beginnings as a master mason, and Wright, having used him on several little commissions, had always found him eager to do his best. This was the first job of any considerable size that Graves had done for the firm, and he had got this by under-bidding considerably all the other general contractors who had been invited to bid on the work. These facts Hart did not happen to know.

"Are you going north, Mr. Hart?" Graves asked, as they turned to the street entrance. "My team is just outside. Shall be pleased to give you a lift."

Speaking thus he ushered the architect from the Canostota where the dusk was already falling. The building rose sheer and massive, six stories above their heads, with rows of unglassed windows like sightless eyes. Jackson looked up at it critically, admitting to himself frankly Wright's ability and restrained taste. This apartment building stood out from its vulgar neighbors with a kind of aristocratic distinction that called the passer-by to admire its frugal plainness.

The contractor's horse was a nervous, fast little beast. The light runabout whirled into the broad avenue of

Grand Boulevard, and there Graves let the animal out for a couple of blocks. A thin smile of satisfaction wrinkled the contractor's bearded lips. Then he pulled on the reins, and turned in his seat to face the architect.

"I'm glad of this chance to get acquainted with you, Mr. Hart," he began pleasantly. "I have been thinking lately that we might be of some use to each other."

He paused to let his words sink into his companion's mind. Then he resumed in a reflective manner: —

"I ain't content to build just for other folks. I want to put up something on my own account. Oh, nothing like as fine as that Canostota, but something pretty and attractive, and a building that will pay good. I've just the lot for it, out south alongside Washington Park. It's a peach! A corner and two hundred feet. Say! Why won't you come out right now and have a look at it? Can you spare the time? Good."

The little runabout whisked around, and they went speeding south over the hard boulevard.

"Now's about the time to build. I've owned the property ever since the slump in real estate right after the fair. Well, I want an architect on my own account! I suppose I could go to one of those Jews who sell their dinky little blue prints by the yard. Most of the flat buildings hereabouts come that way. But I want something *swell.* That's going to be a fine section of the city soon, and looks count in a building, as elsewhere."

Hart laughed at this cordial testimony to his art.

"There's your boss, Wright. But he's too high-toned for me, —wouldn't look at anything that toted up less

than the six figures. And I guess he don't do much designing himself. He leaves that to you young fellows, don't he?"

Hart could see, now, the idea that was in the contractor's mind, and his interest grew. They pulled up near the south corner of the Park, beside some vacant land. It was, as Graves said, a very favorable spot for a showy apartment building.

"I want something real handsome," the contractor continued. "It'll be a high-priced building. And I think *you* are the man to do it."

Graves brought this out like a shot.

"Why, I should like to think of it," the architect began conventionally, not sure what he ought to say.

"Yes, you're the man. I saw the plans for that Aurora church one day while I was waiting to talk with Mr. Wright, and I said to myself then, 'There's the man to draw *my* plans when I get ready to build. The feller that designed that church has got something out of the ordinary in him! He's got style!'"

Praise, even from the mob, is honey to the artist. Jackson instinctively thought better of the self-confident contractor, and decided that he was a bluff, honest man, — common, but well meaning.

"Well, what do you say, Mr. Hart?"

It ended with Hart's practically agreeing to prepare a preliminary sketch. When it came to the matter of business, the young architect found that, notwithstanding

the contractor's high consideration of his talent, he was willing to offer only the very lowest terms for his work. He told the contractor, however, that he would consider his offer, remarking that he should have to leave Wright's office before undertaking the commission.

"But," he said with a sudden rush of will, "I was considering starting for myself very soon, anyway."

It was not until after the contractor had dropped him at his club in the down-town district that he remembered the steel beams in the Canostota. Then it occurred to him that possibly, had it not been for the accident which had brought Graves to that part of the building just as he was on his knees trying to measure the thickness of the metal, the contractor might not have discovered his great talent. As he entered the club washroom, the disagreeable thought came to him that, if the I-beams were not right, Graves had rather cleverly closed his mouth about the Canostota. In agreeing to do a piece of work for Wright's contractor, he had placed himself where he could not easily get that contractor into trouble with his present employer.

As he washed his hands, scrubbing them as if they had been pieces of wood in order to remove the afternoon's dirt, he felt that there was more than one kind of grime in the city.

CHAPTER V

THERE were very few men to be found in the club at this hour. The dingy library, buzzing like a beehive at noon with young men, was empty now except for a stranger who was whiling away his time before a dinner engagement. Most of the men that the architect met at this club were, like himself, younger members of the professions, struggling upward in the crowded ranks of law, medicine, architecture. Others were employed in brokers' offices, or engaged in general business. Some of them had been his classmates in Cornell, or in the technological school, and these had welcomed him with a little dinner on his return from Paris.

After that cheerful reunion he had seen less of these old friends than he had hoped to when he had contemplated Chicago from his Paris apartment. Perhaps there had been something of envy among them for Jackson Hart. Things had seemed very pleasantly shaped for him, and Chicago is yet a community that resents special favors.

Every one was driving himself at top speed. At noon the men fell together about the same table in the grill-room, — worried, fagged, preoccupied. As soon as the day's work was over, their natural instinct was to flee

from the dirt and noise of the business street, where the club was situated, to the cleaner quarters north or south, or to the semi-rural suburbs. Thus the centrifugal force of the city was irresistible.

To-night there were a number of young men in the card-room, sitting over a game of poker, which, judging from the ash-trays on the table, had been in progress since luncheon. Several other men, with hats on and coats over their arms, were standing about the table, looking on.

"Well, Jackie, my boy!" one of the players called out, "where have you been hiding yourself this week?"

Ben Harris, the man who hailed the architect, had apparently been drinking a good deal. The other men at the table called out sharply, "Shut up, Ben. Play!"

But the voluble Harris, whose drink had made him more than usually impudent, remarked further: —

"Say, Jack! ain't you learned yet that we don't pattern after the German Emperor here in Chicago? Better comb out your mustache, or they'll be taking you for some foreign guy."

Hart merely turned his back on Harris, and listened with exaggerated interest to what a large, heavy man, with a boy's smooth face, was saying: —

"He was of no. special 'count in college, — a kind of second-rate hustler, you know. But, my heavens! Since he struck this town, he's got in his work. I don't believe he knows enough law to last him over night. But he knows how to make the right men think he does. He started in to work for those Selinas Mills people, — dam-

age suits and collecting. Here in less than five years he's drawing the papers for the consolidation of all the paper-mills in the country!"

"Who's that, Billy?" Hart asked.

"Leverett, Joe Leverett. He was Yale '89, and at the law school with me."

"He must have the right stuff in him, all the same," commented one man.

"I don't know about that!" the first speaker retorted. "Some kind of stuff, of course. But I said he was no lawyer, and never will be, and I repeat it. And what's more, half the men who are earning the big money in law here in Chicago don't know enough law to try a case properly."

"That's so," assented one man.

"Same thing in medicine."

"Oh, it's the same all over."

The men about the card-table launched out into a heated discussion of the one great topic of modern life — Success. The game of poker finally closed, and the players joined in the conversation. Fresh drinks were ordered, and cigars were passed about. The theme caught the man most eager to go home, and fired the brain most fagged.

"The pity of it, too," said the large man called Billy, dominating the room with his deep voice and deliberate speech, — "the pity of it is that it ruins the professions. You can see it right here in Chicago. Who cares for fine professional work, if it don't bring in the stuff? Yes, look at our courts! look at our doctors! And look

at our buildings It's money every time. The professions have been commercialized."

"Oh, Billy!" exclaimed Ben Harris. "Is this a commencement oration you are giving us?"

A quiet voice broke in from behind the circle: —

"There's much in what you say, Mr. Blount. Time has been when it meant something of honor for a man to be a member of one of the learned professions. Men were content to take part of their pay in honor and respect from the community. There's no denying that's all changed now. We measure everything by one yardstick, and that is money. So the able lawyer and the able doctor have joined the race with the mob for the dollars. But" — his eye seemed to rest on the young architect, who was listening attentively — "that state of affairs can't go on. When we shake down in this modern world of ours, and have got used to our wealth, and have made the right adjustment between capital and labor, — the professions, the learned professions, will be elevated once more. Men are so made that they want to respect something. And in the long run they will respect learning, ideas, and devotion to the public welfare."

The speaker's eye seemed to challenge the young architect, who listened attentively, without thorough conviction. Something in the older man antagonized Jackson's mood. It was easy enough for a man like Pemberton with an assured position and comfortable means to take lofty views!

"That's all right, Pemberton," Harris retorted. "That's first-class talk. But I guess I see about as much of human

nature in my business as any man, and I tell you, it's only human nature to get what you can out of the game. What men respect in this town is money, — first, last, and all the time. So it's only natural for a man, whether he is a lawyer or anything else, to do as the other Romans do."

Harris brought his bony, lined hand down on the card-table with a thump, and leaned forward, thrusting out his long, unshaven chin at the older man who had spoken. His black hair, which was thin above the temples and across the middle of his head, was rumpled, his collar bent, and his cuffs blackened about the edges. Hart had known him as a boy twelve years before at the South Side High School. Thence he had gone to a state university where four years had made little impression, at least externally, on his raw character, and then he had entered a broker's office, and had made money on the Board of Trade. Lately it had been reported that he was losing money in wheat.

"Yes, sir," he snarled on, having suppressed the others for the moment. "It don't make much difference, either, how you get your money so far as I can see. Whether you do a man in a corner in wheat, or run a pool room. All is, if you want to be in the game, you must have the price of admission about you. And the rest is talk for the ladies and the young."

Pemberton replied in a severe tone: —

"That is easy to say and easy to believe. But when I think of the magnificent gift to the public just made by one of these very men whom you would consider a mere

money-grabber, I confess I am obliged to doubt your easy analysis of our modern life!"

Pemberton spoke with a kind of authority. He was one of the older men of the club, much respected in the city, and perfectly fearless. But the broker, also, feared no man's opinion.

"Gifts to education!" sneered Ben Harris. "That's what they do to show off when they're through with their goods. Anyway, there's too much education going around. It don't count. The only thing that counts, to-day, here, now, is money. Can you make it or steal it or — inherit it!"

He looked across the room at Jackson Hart and laughed. The architect disliked this vulgar reference to his own situation, but, on the whole, he was much more inclined to agree with the broker than he would have been a few days earlier.

"I am sorry that such ideas should be expressed inside this club," Pemberton answered gravely. "If there is one place in this city where the old ideals of the professions should be reverenced, where men should deny that cheap philosophy of the street, by their acts as well as by their words, it should be here in this club."

Some of the others in the group nodded their approval of this speech. They said nothing, however; for the conversation had reached a point of delicacy that made men hesitate to say what they thought. Pemberton turned on his heel and walked away. The irrepressible Harris called after him belligerently: —

"Oh, I don't know about that, now, Mr. Pember-

ton. It takes all kinds of men to make a club, you know."

As the little group broke up, Harris linked his arm in Hart's.

"I've got something to say to you, Jackie," he said boisterously. "We'll order dinner, if you are free, and I'll put you up to something that's better than old Pemberton's talk. It just occurred to me while we were gassing here."

The young architect did not quite like Harris's style, but he had already planned to dine at the club, and they went upstairs to the dining-room together. He was curious to hear what the broker might have to suggest to him.

Hart had agreed with Pemberton's ideas, naturally enough, in the abstract. But in the concrete, the force of circumstances, here in this roaring city where he found himself caught, was fast preparing him to accept the Harris view. Like most men of his class he was neither an idealist nor a weakling: he was merely a young man, still making up his character as he went along, and taking color more or less from the landscape he found himself in.

His aspirations for art, if not fine, were sufficiently earnest and sincere. He had always thought of himself as luckily fortuned, so that he could devote himself to getting real distinction in his profession. So he had planned his life in Paris. Now, brought back from that pleasant world into this stern city, with all its striving, apparently, centred upon the one business of making money, then deprived by what seemed to him a harsh

and unfair freak of fortune of all his pleasant expectations, he was trying to read the face of Destiny. And there he seemed to find written what this gritty broker had harshly expressed. There was, to be sure, another road to fortune, which had not been mentioned, and that was to make a rich marriage. This road had been followed with signal success by a number of his acquaintances: it was one of the well-recognized methods of attaining that point of vantage which he had hoped to inherit, — to win one of the daughters of wealth! And since his return from Europe the young architect had had his opportunities in the society where he had been welcomed. But apart from his growing love for Helen Spellman, he was too sturdy a man to like this easy method of advancement. He turned from the idea with instinctive repugnance, and an honest feeling of contempt for the men who in that way had sneaked into fortune.

"Say, you've got a good friend in Mrs. Will Phillips," Harris began bluntly when they were seated opposite each other.

"Oh, Mrs. Phillips! I used to see something of her in Paris," Jackson acknowledged indifferently.

He remembered that he had not followed the widow's invitation to call upon her, all thought of her having been driven out of his mind by the happenings of the last few days.

"I rather think she would like to see more of you in Chicago!" the broker laughed back.

"How do you know?" Hart asked, wondering where Harris's path crossed that of the gay Mrs. Phillips.

"Oh, I know all right. She's a good customer of ours. I've been talking to her half the afternoon about things."

"Oh!" Jackson exclaimed, not much interested in the subject.

The broker's next remark had nothing to do with Mrs. Phillips.

"You fellows don't make much money building houses. Ain't that so? You need other jobs. Well, I am going to give you a pointer."

He stopped mysteriously, and then began again: —

"I happen to know that the C. R. and N. Road is going to put a lot of money into improvements this summer. Among other things they're getting ready to build new stations all along the north shore line, — you know, up through the suburbs, — Forest Park, Shoreham, and so on. They've got a lot of swell patronage out that way, and they are making ready for more."

Hart listened to the broker with renewed interest. He wondered how Harris should happen to know this news ahead of the general public, and he began to see the connection it might have with his own fortune.

"That's where they are going to put a lot of their surplus earnings. Now, those stations must be the top of the style, — real buildings, not sheds. And I don't think they have any architect yet."

"Well!" the architect remarked cynically. "The president or one of the vice-presidents will have a son, or nephew, or some one to work in. Or, perhaps, they may have a competitive trial for the plans."

"Perhaps they will, and perhaps they won't," Harris

answered knowingly. "The man who will decide all that is their first vice-president, — Raymond, Colonel Stevens P. Raymond, — know him?"

Hart shook his head.

"Well, Mrs. Phillips does. He lives out in Forest Park, where she's thinking of building a big house."

"Is Mrs. Phillips thinking of building in Forest Park?" the architect asked quickly.

Harris looked at him in a bored manner.

"Why, I thought you were going to draw the plans!"

"She asked me to come to see her," Hart admitted. "But that was all. I thought it was just a social matter."

"Well, if a rich and good-looking woman asked me to call on her, I shouldn't take all year about making up my mind!"

Jackson could not help thinking that it would be more embarrassing to call on the widow now than if he had not had this talk with the broker. His relations with Mrs. Phillips in Paris had been pleasant, unalloyed with business. He remembered how he had rather patronized the ambitious young woman, who had desired to meet artists, to go to their studios, and to give little dinners where every one talked French but her stupid husband.

"The widow Phillips thinks a lot of your ability, Jackie, and old S. P. R. thinks a lot of the widow. Now do you see?"

The architect laughed nervously. He could see plainly enough what was meant, but he did not like it altogether.

"She can do what she likes with the old man. The

job is as good as yours, if you work it properly. I've given you the tip straight ahead of the whole field. Not a soul knows that the C. R. and N. is going in for this kind of thing."

"It would be a big chance," the architect replied. "It was good of you to think of me, Ben."

"That's all right. It popped into my head when that ass Pemberton began his talk about your uncle's gift to the public. I must say, Jack, it seemed to me a dirty trick of the old man to cut you out the way he did. Are you going to fight the will, or is it so fixed that you can't?"

"I don't know, yet, what I shall do about it."

"To bring a fellow up as he did you, and then knock on him at the end, — it's just low down!"

That was the view Jackson Hart was more and more inclined to take of his uncle's will, and he warmed to the coarse, outspoken broker, who had shown him real friendliness when he was no longer in a position to be of importance to any one. Harris seemed to him to be warm-blooded and human. The young architect was beginning to feel that this was not a world for delicacy of motive and refinement. When he suggested diffidently that some large firm of architects would probably be chosen by the C. R. and N. people, Harris said: —

"Rats! Raymond won't hunt round for references, beyond what Mrs. Phillips will give him. You see her as quick as you can and tell her you want the chance."

The opportunity which Harris had suggested would be given to him by a woman. Yet, however much he might dislike to go to a woman for such help, the chance began

to loom large in his imagination. Here was something that even Wright would be glad to have. He saw himself in his own office, having two large commissions to start with, and possibly a third, — Mrs. Phillips's new house in Forest Park!

Perhaps Wright did know, after all, about the C. R. and N. matter. Hart's fighting blood rose: he would do his best to snatch this good thing from him, or from any other architect! And to do it he would take the readiest means at hand. He forgot his contempt for that American habit of pull which he had much deplored in studio discussions. All that had been theory; this was personal and practical. When Harris had to leave, after coffee, the architect shook him warmly by the hand and thanked him again for his friendliness.

Within the day Fortune had smiled upon him twice. Neither time, to be sure, was the way to her favor quite what he would have chosen if he could have chosen. But one must not discriminate too nicely, the young man was beginning to feel, when one picks up the cards to play. . . .

Below, from the busy street, rose the piercing note of the city, — rattle, roar, and clang, — scarcely less shrill at eight of an evening than at noon. From the bulk-heads on the roof of the next building soared a drab-colored cloud of steam, eddying upwards even to the open windows of the club dining-room. The noise, the smell, the reek of the city touched the man, folded him in, swayed him like a subtle opiate. The thirst of the terrible game of living, the desire of things, the brute love of triumph,

filled his veins. Old Powers Jackson, contemptuously putting him to one side, had unconsciously worked this state of mind in him. He, Jackson Hart, would show the world that he could fight for himself, could snatch the prize that every one was fighting for, the supreme prize of man's life to-day — a little pot of gold!

CHAPTER VI

"How did young Mr. Hart take the will?" Mrs. Phillips asked her brother-in-law the first time she saw him after the funeral.

"Why, all right, I guess," the judge answered slowly. "Why shouldn't he?"

"I hoped he would fight it," the widow replied, eying the judge calmly.

"I believe he isn't that much of a fool. Just because Powers looked after his mother, and fed him all these years, and gave him an expensive education, — why should he be obliged to leave the chap all his money, if he didn't want to?"

Mrs. Phillips avoided a direct reply, and continued to announce her opinions, — a method of conversation which she knew was highly irritating to the judge.

"Philanthropy! What's the use of such philanthropy? The city has enough schools. It's all foolishness to give your money to other people to eat up!"

"That is a matter of feeling," Judge Phillips answered dryly. "I shouldn't expect you to feel as Powers did about such things."

Harrison Phillips had few illusions concerning his sister-in-law, and she knew it. Years before they had

reached the point where they dispensed with polite subterfuges and usually confined their social intercourse to the superficial surface of conversation. He had known her ever since she came to Chicago from a little Illinois town to study music. Indeed, he had first introduced his younger brother to her, he remembered unhappily. She was Louise Faunce, then, — a keen, brown-eyed country girl of eighteen. When Will Phillips wanted to marry her, the judge had already felt the pretty girl's little claws, and had been foolish enough to warn his brother of his fate. Will Phillips was a dull young man, and had poor health. The older brother knew that Will was being married for his money, — a considerable fortune for a girl from Ottumwa, Illinois.

And the marriage had not been a happy one. The last years of his life Will Phillips had taken to drinking. The judge felt that the wife had driven his brother to his sodden end, and he hated her for it, with a proper and legal hatred. Six months before his end Will Phillips had come home from Europe, leaving his two children in Paris with his wife, apparently for an indefinite separation. Why the widow had chosen to return to Chicago after her husband's death was a mystery to the judge, who never gave Louise Phillips credit for half her character. For she was shrewd enough to perceive that neither she nor her children could have any permanent position in the world outside of Chicago. And she had no mind to sacrifice the social position that her husband's family and friends had made for her.

She told her brother-in-law on her return that she had

found Europe an unsuitable place in which to bring up the children, and proposed before long to build a new house, perhaps in Forest Park, — one of the older and more desirable suburbs to the north of the city.

"I must make a home for my children among their father's friends," she said to the judge with perfect propriety. "Venetia, especially, should have the right background now that she is becoming a young woman."

Venetia — so named in one of the rare accesses of sentiment which came to Mrs. Phillips, as to all mortals, because it was to Venice that she had first been taken as a young bride — was now sixteen years old. Her brother Stanwood, a year younger, had been placed in a fashionable Eastern school, where he was preparing for Yale, and ultimately for the "career of diplomacy," as his mother called it.

The judge, who was trustee for his brother's children, had called this Sunday afternoon to discuss the project of the new house with his sister-in-law. She had notified him that she should need presently a considerable sum of money, and expected to take a part of it, at least, from the children's inheritance. About this money matter they had come to a warm difference of opinion, which Mrs. Phillips had put aside momentarily to discuss the Jackson will.

"If you will wait," she remarked, having exhausted her opinion about philanthropy and Powers Jackson's

will, "you might see my architect. I have asked Mr. Hart to call this afternoon."

"I don't pine to see him," the old man retorted testily. "So you have gone that far?"

"Yes! There isn't the slightest use of being disagreeable about it, you see. Nothing that you can say will change my mind. It never has. You would like to keep me from spending the money. But you can't without a row, a scandal. Besides, I know it will be a good investment for both the children."

"You were always pretty keen for a good investment!"

"You mean by that sarcasm that you think I was sharp when I married your brother, because I had nothing but my good looks. They were certainly worth as much as a husband — who — drank himself — to death."

"We won't go into that, please," the judge said, his bright blue eyes glittering. "I hope, Louise, to live to see the day when you get what you deserve, — just how I don't know."

"Thank you, Harrison," Mrs. Phillips replied unperturbed. "We all do get what we deserve, sooner or later, don't we?"

"Sometimes I give up hope!" the old man exclaimed irascibly.

"There's my young man now!" she observed, looking out of the window. "If you want to know just what extravagances I am going into, you had better wait."

"I'll know soon enough! Where's Ven? I want to see her."

"She should be out riding with John."

Mrs. Phillips rose from her deep chair to greet the architect. All at once her face and manner seemed to lose the hard, cold surface that she had presented to the judge, the surface of a middle-aged, shrewd woman. Suddenly she expanded, opened herself graciously to the young man.

The old gentleman stalked out of the drawing-room, with a curt nod and a grunt for Hart. The architect looked to the widow for an explanation of the stormy atmosphere, but, ignoring the judge, she smiled all the warmer welcome to her visitor.

"So good of you to answer my note promptly," she murmured. "For I know how busy you are!"

"I had already promised myself the pleasure for to-day," Jackson replied quickly, using a phrase he had thought up on his way into the room.

And as he looked at her resting in her deep chair, he realized that it was a distinct pleasure to be there. He felt that here in Chicago even in the ugly drawing-room of the old-fashioned house Mrs. Will Phillips was much more of a person than she had been in Paris. Still, here as there, the woman in her was the first and last fact. She was thirty-seven, and in the very best of health. To one who did not lay exclusive emphasis on mere youth, the first bloom of the fruit, she was much more beautiful than when, as a raw girl from Ottumwa, she had married

Willie Phillips. Sensitive, nervous, in the full tide of her physical life, she had what is euphemistically called to-day temperament. To this instinctive side of the woman, the handsome, strong young man had always appealed.

It is also true that she was clever, and had learned with great rapidity how to cover up the holes of a wretched education. At first, however, a man could think of but one thing in the presence of Mrs. Phillips: "You are a woman, and a very inviting one!"

Doubtless she meant that men should think that, and nothing more, at first. Those who had come through the fire, to whom she was cold and hard, like an inferior gem, might say later with the judge: —

"Louise flings her sex at you from the first smile. If you feel that sort of thing, the only thing to do is to run."

Jackson Hart had not yet reached this point of human experience. Nevertheless, he was but dimly aware that the woman opposite him troubled his mind, preoccupied as it happened to be with business, like a too pronounced perfume. Here, in the hard atmosphere of an American city, he was not inclined to remember the sentimentalities of his Paris days and was more interested in the widow's prospective house than in her personal charms. Accordingly, Mrs. Phillips, with quick perception, soon dropped the reminiscential tone that she had been inclined to take at first. She came promptly to business: —

"Could you consider a small commission, Mr. Hart?" she asked with apparent hesitation.

The architect would have undertaken to build a doll's house. Nevertheless, his heart sank at the word "small."

"I so much want your advice, at any rate. I value your taste so highly. You taught me how to look at things over there. And we should agree, I am sure!"

Then she unfolded more plainly her purpose of building in Forest Park. She had thought of something Tudor. (She had been visiting at a Tudor house in the East.) But the architect, without debating the point, sketched on the back of an envelope the outline of an old French château, — a toy study in part of the famous château at Chenonceaux.

"What a lovely roof!" Mrs. Phillips exclaimed responsively. "And how the thing grows under your hand! It seems as though you must have had just what I wanted in mind." She leaned over the little piece of paper, fascinated by the architect's facility.

As he drew in the façade, he noticed that the widow had very lovely hair, of a tone rarely found in America, between brown and black, — dusky. Then he remembered that he had made the same observation before in Paris. The arch of her neck, which was strong and full, was also excellent. And her skin was of a perfect pallor.

By the time he had made these observations and finished his rough little sketch, the Tudor period had been forgotten, and the question of the commission had been really decided. There remained to be debated the matter of cost. After one or two tactful feints the archi-

tect was forced to ask bluntly what the widow expected to spend on the house. At the mention of money Mrs. Phillips's brows contracted slightly. A trace of hardness, like fine enamel, settled on her features.

"What could you build it for?" she demanded brusquely.

"Why, on a thing like this you can spend what you like," he stammered. "Of course a house in Forest Park ought to be of a certain kind, — to be a good investment," he added politely.

"Of course. Would twenty-five thousand dollars be enough?"

The architect felt relieved on hearing the size of the figure, but he had had time to realize that this agreeable client might be close in money matters. It would be well to have her mind keyed to a liberal figure at the start, and he said boldly: —

"You could do a good deal for that. But not a place like this, — such a one as you ought to have, Mrs. Phillips," he added, appealing to her vanity.

Once he had called her Louise, and they both were conscious of the fact. Nevertheless, she eyed him keenly. She was quite well aware that he wanted to get all the freedom to develop his sketch that a good sum of money would give, and also had in mind the size of his fee, which would be a percentage of the cost. But this consideration did not offend her. In this struggle, mental and polite, over the common topic of money, she expected him to assert himself.

"It's no use being small in such matters," she con-

ceded at length, having reflected on the profits of certain dealings with Ben Harris's firm. "Let us say fifty thousand!"

"That's much more possible!" the architect replied buoyantly, with a vague idea already forming that his sketches might call for a house that would cost seventy or seventy-five thousand dollars to complete.

The money matter out of the way, the widow relapsed into her friendly manner.

"I hope you can begin right away! I am so anxious to get out of this old barn, and I want to unpack all the treasures I bought in Europe the last time."

Judge Phillips would have shuddered to hear his brother's large brick house, encircled in Chicago fashion by a neat strip of grass, referred to as a "barn." And the architect, on his side, knowing something of Louise Phillips's indiscriminate taste in antiquities, was resolved to cull the "treasures" before they found a place in his edifice.

"Why, I'll begin on some sketches right away. If they please you, I could do the plans at once — just as soon as I get my own office," he added honestly. "You know I have been working for Walker, Post, and Wright. But I am going to leave them very soon."

"I am glad to hear that," Mrs. Phillips replied sympathetically. "It ought to have been so different. I think that will was disgraceful! I hope you can break it."

"I don't know that I shall try," he answered hastily, startled at the widow's cool comment on his uncle's purposes.

"Well, you know best, I suppose. But *I* should think a long time before I let them build that school."

"At any rate, it looks now as if I should want all the work I can get," he answered, looking into her eyes, and thinking of what Harris had told him of the C. R. and N. job. He had it on his lips to add, "Can't you say a word for me to your friend Colonel Raymond?" But he could not bring himself easily to the point of asking outright for business favors at a woman's hand. While he hesitated, not finding a phrase sufficiently delicate to express the idea, she happily saved him from the crudity of open speech.

"Perhaps I can help you in certain ways. There's something — Well, we won't begin on that to-day. But you can rest assured that I am your friend, can't you?"

They understood each other thus easily. He knew that she was well aware of what was in his mind, and was disposed to help him to the full extent of her woman's power. In his struggle for money and place, — things that she appreciated, — she would be an able friend.

Having come to a complete agreement on a number of matters, in the manner of a man and a woman, they began to talk of Paris and of other days. Outside in the hall there was the sound of steps, and a laughing, vigorous girl's voice. The architect could see a thin, tall girl, as she threw her arms about Judge Phillips's plump neck and pulled his head to a level with her mouth. He noticed that Mrs. Phillips was also watching this scene with stealthy eyes. When the door had closed upon the judge, she called: —

"Venetia, will you come here, dear! I want you to meet Mr. Hart. You remember Mr. Hart?"

The girl crossed the drawing-room slowly, the fire in her strangely extinguished at the sound of her mother's voice. She gave a bony little hand to the architect, and nodded her head, like a rebellious trick dog. Then she drew away from the two and stood beside the window, waiting for the next order.

She was dark like her mother, but her features lacked the widow's pleasant curves. They were firm and square, and a pair of dark eyes looked out moodily from under heavy eyebrows. The short red lips were full and curved, while the mother's lips were dangerously thin and straight. As the architect looked at the girl, standing tall and erect in the light from the western window, he felt that she was destined to be of some importance. It was also plain enough that she and her mother were not sympathetic. When the widow spoke, the daughter seemed to listen with the terrible criticism of youth lurking in her eyes.

A close observer would have seen, also, that the girl had in her a capacity for passion that the mother altogether lacked. The woman was mildly sensuous and physical in mood, but totally without the strong emotions of the girl that might sweep her to any act, mindless of fate. When the clash came between the two, as it was likely to come before long, the mother would be the one to retreat.

"Have you had your ride, dear?" Mrs. Phillips asked in soothing tones, carefully prepared for the public.

"No, mamma. Uncle Harry was here, you know."

"I am sorry not to have you take your ride every day, no matter what happens," the mother continued, as if she had not heard the girl's excuse.

"I had rather see uncle Harry. Besides, Frolic went lame yesterday."

"You can always take my horse," Mrs. Phillips persisted, her eyebrows contracting as they had over the money question.

A look of what some day might become contempt shadowed the girl's face. She bowed to the architect in her stiff way which made him understand that it was no recommendation to her favor to be her mother's friend, and walked across the room with a dignity beyond the older woman's power.

"She is at the difficult age," the mother murmured.

"She is growing beautiful!" Jackson exclaimed.

"I hope so," Mrs. Phillips answered composedly. "When can you let me see the sketches?"

"In two or three days."

"Won't you dine with us next Wednesday, then?"

She seemed to have arranged every detail of the transaction with accuracy and care.

CHAPTER VII

The Spellmans lived on the other side of the city from Mrs. Phillips, on Maple Street, very near the lake. Their little stone-front, Gothic-faced house was pretty nearly all the tangible property that Mr. Spellman had to leave to his widow and child when he died, sixteen years before. There had been also his small interest in Jackson's Bridge Works, an interest which at the time was largely speculative, but which had enabled Powers Jackson to pay the widow a liberal income without hurting her pride.

The house had remained very much what it had been during Mr. Spellman's lifetime, its bright Brussels carpets and black-walnut furniture having taken on the respectability of age and use. Here, in this homely eddy of the great city, mother and daughter were seated reading after their early dinner, as was their custom. Helen, having shown no aptitude for society, after one or two seasons of playing the wall-flower at the modest parties of their acquaintance, had resolutely sought her own interests in life. One of these was a very earnest attempt to get that vague thing called an education. Just at present, this consisted of much reading of a sociological character suggested by a course of university lectures which she had followed during the winter.

Mrs. Spellman, who had been turning the leaves of a magazine, finally looked up from its pages and asked, "Have you seen Jackson since the funeral?"

Helen dropped her book into her lap and looked at her mother with startled eyes.

"No, mother. I suppose he is very busy just now."

She spoke as if she had already asked herself this question a number of times, and answered it in the same way without satisfaction.

"I wonder what he means to do about the will," Mrs. Spellman continued. "It must have been a great disappointment to him. I wonder if he had any idea how it would be?"

"What makes you think he is disappointed?" the girl asked literally.

"Why, I saw Everett this morning, and he told me he thought his cousin might contest the will. He said Jackson was feeling very sore. It would be such a pity if there were any trouble over Powers's will!"

Helen shut the book in her lap and laid it on the table very firmly.

"How can Everett say such things! You know, mother, Jackson would never think of doing anything so — mean — so ungrateful!"

"Some people might consider that he was justified. And it is a very large sum of money. If he had expectations of —"

"Just because uncle Powers was always so kind to him!" the girl interrupted hotly. "Was that any reason why he should leave him a lot of his money?"

"My dear, most people would think it was a sufficient reason for leaving him more than he did."

"Then most people are very self-interested! Everett Wheeler might expect it. But Jackson has something better in life to do than worry over not getting his uncle's money."

Mrs. Spellman, who had known Jackson since he was a child, smiled wisely, but made no reply.

"What good would the money be to him? Why should he want more than he has, — the chance to do splendid things, to work for something better than money? That's the worst about men like Everett, — they think of nothing but money, money, from morning to night. He doesn't believe that a man can care for any other thing."

"Poor Everett!" her mother remarked with quiet irony. "He isn't thinking of contesting the will, however."

"Nor is Jackson, I am sure!" the girl answered positively.

She rose from her chair by the lamp, and walked to and fro in the room. When she stood she was a tall woman, almost large, showing the growth that the New England stock can develop in a favorable environment. While she read, her features had been quite dull, but they were fired now with feeling, and the deep eyes burned.

Mrs. Spellman, whose thoughts had travelled rapidly, asked suddenly with apparent irrelevancy: —

"How would you like to spend a year in Europe?"

"Why should we?" the girl demanded quickly, paus-

ing opposite her mother. "What makes you say that?"

"There isn't much to keep us here," Mrs. Spellman explained. "You enjoyed your trip so much, and I am stronger now. We needn't travel, you know."

The girl turned away her face, as she answered evasively, "But why should we go away? I don't want to leave Chicago."

She divined that her mother was thinking of what had occurred to her many times, as these last days had gone by without their seeing the young architect. Possibly, now that he knew himself to be without fortune, he wished to show her plainly that there could be no question of marriage between them. She rejected the idea haughtily, and resented her mother's acceptance of it which was implied in her suggestion. And even if it were so, she was not the one to admit to herself the wound. It would be no pleasure for her to go away.

Could it be true that he was thinking of fighting the will? Her heart scorned the suggestion, for there was in her one immense capacity, one fiery power, and that was the instinct to transform all that she knew and felt into something finer than it actually was. Her eyes were blind to the sordid lines in the picture; her ears deaf to the discordant notes. In that long passage home through the Mediterranean and across the Atlantic her soul had given itself unknown to herself to this man, and she could not admit the slightest disloyalty to her conception of him!

She returned to her chair, resolutely picked up her book, and turned the pages with a methodical, unseeing regu-

larity. As the clock tinkled off nine strokes, Mrs. Spellman rose, kissed the girl, silently pressing her fingers on the light folds of her hair, and went upstairs. Another half hour went by; then, as the clock neared ten, the doorbell rang. Helen, recollecting that the servants had probably left the kitchen, put down her book and stepped into the hall. She waited a moment there, but when the bell rang a second time she went resolutely to the door and opened it.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Jackson! I thought it might be a tramp."

"Well, perhaps you aren't so far wrong," the architect answered with a laugh. "I've been walking miles. Is it too late to come in?"

For answer she held the door wide open.

"I have been dining with Mrs. Phillips; she has asked me to draw some plans for her," Jackson explained. "As I came by the house, I thought I would tell you and your mother about it."

"Mother has gone upstairs, but come in. You know I always read late. And I am so glad to hear about the plans."

The strong night wind brushed boisterously through the open door, ruffling the girl's loosely coiled hair. She put her hands to her head to tighten the hairpins here and there. If the man could have read colors in the dark hall, he would have seen that Helen's face, usually too pale, had flushed. His ears were quick enough to detect the tremulous note in her voice, the touch of surprise and sudden feeling. It answered something elec-

tric in himself, something that had driven him to her across the city straightway from Mrs. Phillips's house!

He followed her into the circle of lamplight, and sat down heavily in the chair that she had been occupying.

"What's this thing you are reading?" he asked in his usual tone of authority, picking up the bulky volume beneath the lamp. "Hobson's 'Social Problem.' Where did you get hold of that? It's pretty heavy reading, isn't it?"

His tolerantly amused tone indicated the value he put on women's efforts to struggle with abstract ideas.

"Professor Sturges recommended it in his last lecture. It isn't hard — only it makes me feel so ignorant!"

"Um," he commented, turning over the leaves critically.

"But tell me about Mrs. Phillips and the house."

There was an awkward constraint between them, not that the hour or the circumstance of their being alone made them self-conscious. There was nothing unusual in his being there late like this, after Mrs. Spellman had gone upstairs. But to-night there was in the air the consciousness that many things had happened since they had been together alone: the old man's death, the funeral, the will, — most of all the will!

He told her of the new house in Forest Park. It had been decided upon that evening, his preliminary sketches having been received enthusiastically. But he lacked all interest in it. He was thinking how the past week had changed everything in his life, and most of all his rela-

tion with this girl. Because of that he had not been to see her before, and he felt uncertain of himself in being here now.

"Mother and I have just been speaking of you. We haven't seen you since the funeral, you know," Helen remarked, saying simply what was in her mind.

Her words carried no reproach. Yet at once he felt that he was put on the defensive; it was not easy to explain why he had avoided the Maple Street house.

"A lot has happened lately," he replied vaguely. "Things have changed pretty completely for me!"

A tone of bitterness crept into his voice in spite of himself. He wanted sympathy; for that, in part, he had come to her to-night. At the same time he felt that it was a weak thing to do, that he should have gone almost anywhere but to her.

"It takes a man a few days to catch his breath," he continued, "when he finds he's been cut off with a shilling, as they say in the play."

Her eyes dropped from his face, and her hands began to move restlessly over the folds of her skirt.

"I've had a lot to think about — to look at the future in a new way. There's no hope now of my leaving this place, thanks to uncle!"

"Oh!" she exclaimed in a low voice. The coldness of her tone was not lost upon the man. He saw quickly that it would not do to admit to her that he even contemplated contesting his uncle's will. She was not sympathetic in the manner of Mrs. Phillips!

"Of course," he hastened to add magnanimously,

"uncle had a perfect right to do as he liked. It was his money. But what could he have had against me?"

"Why, nothing, I am sure!" she answered quickly.

"It looks, though, as if he had!"

"Why?" she stammered, trying to adjust herself to his level of thought. "Perhaps he thought it was better so — better for you," she suggested gently. "He used to say that the men of his time had more in their lives than men have nowadays, because they had to rely on themselves to make all the fight from the beginning. Nowadays so many young men inherit capital and position. He thought there were two great gifts in life, — health and education. When a man had those, he could go out to meet the future bravely without any other help."

"Yes, I have heard him say all that," he hastened to admit. "But the world isn't running on just the same lines it was when uncle Powers was working at the forge. It's a longer road up these days."

"Is it?" the girl asked vaguely. Then they were silent once more.

There was nothing of reproof in her words, yet he felt keenly the difference in the atmosphere of this faded little Maple Street house from the world he had been living in of late. He had told himself for the last week that now he could not marry this woman, that a great and perfectly obvious barrier had been raised between them by his disinheritance. It had all been so clear to him from the first that he had not questioned the idea. This sacrifice of his love seemed to him the greatest that his uncle had forced upon him, and as the days had gone

by he had thought incessantly how he might avoid it, how he might obtain some part at least of that vanishing fortune.

This very evening he had had more talk about the will with the clever Mrs. Phillips, and he had come away from her almost resolved to contest the instrument. On the morrow he would notify his cousin, consult a lawyer, and take the preliminary steps. On the very heels of that decision there had come an irresistible desire to see this other woman, — the longing for the antithesis which so often besets the uncertain human will. Nothing was more unlike Mrs. Phillips in his horizon than this direct, inexperienced girl, full of pure enthusiasms!

Now Helen had made him feel very surely that nothing would remove him farther from her than the act he was contemplating in order to obtain her. If she but knew his intention, she might scorn him forever! He had lost her somehow, either way, he kept saying to himself, as he sat there trying to think calmly, to feel less. And straightway he put another black mark against his uncle's memory!

He had never cared to be near her so much as now. Every soreness and weakness of his spirit seemed to call out for her strong, capable hand. Even the sensuous Mrs. Phillips, by some subtle crossing of the psychological wires, had driven him back to this plain girl, with the honest eyes and unimpassioned bosom. So also had the slippery contractor and the shrewd men at his club. In fact, his world had conspired to set him down here, before the one who alone knew nothing of its logic!

"You haven't said anything about the school," Helen remarked after a time. "Aren't you glad!" she exclaimed, in the need of her spirit to know him to be as generous as she thought him. "It was so big, so large-hearted of him! Especially after all the bitter things the papers had said about him, — to give pretty nearly everything he had made, the whole work of his life, to help the working people — the very ones who had so often misunderstood him and tried to hurt him. He was great enough to forget the strikes and the riots, and their shooting at him! He forgave them. He saw why they erred, and he wanted to lift them out of their hate and their ignorance. He wanted to make their lives happier and better! Weren't you glad? Wasn't it a splendid answer to his enemies!"

Thus she idealized Powers Jackson, that hoary old he-wolf of the prairies! Strength and tenderness and generosity she saw in him and nothing else, and she loved him as she might have loved her father, unquestioningly. In his somewhat loose attempt to return to the world a part of the wealth he had got from it perhaps he had justified the girl's vision of him. Fierce and harsh as he had appeared to others, was he not at the end hers rather than the world's?

The warmth of her feeling lent her quiet face glow and beauty. She had spoken fast, but in a distinct, low voice, which had a note of appeal in it, coming from her desire to rouse the man. For the moment she succeeded. He was ashamed to seem unworthy in her eyes, to harbor base thoughts.

"Why, yes," he admitted; "as you put it, it seems fine. But I don't feel sure that I admire an old man's philanthropies, altogether. He doesn't want the money any longer, — that's a sure thing! So he chucks it into some big scheme or other that's likely to bring him a lot of fame. Uncle Powers was sharp enough in gathering his dollars, and in keeping 'em too so long as he" —

"Oh! How can you say that? Don't!" the girl implored, looking at him with troubled eyes.

If she had had much experience of men and things, — if she had had the habit of mean interpretation, — she would have understood the architect's perplexity long before this. But added to her inexperience was her persistent need of soul to see those she loved large and generous.

"Well," Hart resumed, more guardedly, "I didn't mean any disrespect to the old man. It's only the oldest law of life that he lived up to. And I guess he meant to have me learn that law as fast as I can. You've got to fight for what you want in this world, and fight hard, and fight all the time. And there isn't much room for sentiment and fine ideas and philanthropy until you are old, and have earned your pile, and done your neighbor out of his in the process!"

She was silent, and he continued, willing to let her see some of the harder, baser reaches of his mind: —

"It's just the same way with art. It's only good when it succeeds. It doesn't live unless it can succeed in pleasing people, in making money. I see that now! Chicago has taught me that much in two years. I'm going to open my own shop as soon as I can and look for

trade. That's what uncle wanted me to do. If I get some big commissions, and put up a lot of skyscrapers or mills, why, I shall have won out. What does any one care for the kind of work you do? It's the price it brings every time!"

"Don't say that! Please, please don't talk that way, so bitterly."

There was real pain in her voice, and her eyes were filmed with incipient tears. He leaned forward in his low chair and asked impetuously: "Why do you say that? Why do you care what I say?"

Her lips trembled; she looked at him piteously for a moment, as if to beg him not to force her to confess more openly how he had hurt her, how much she could be hurt by seeing in him the least touch of baseness. She rose, without knowing what she did, in an unconscious instinct for flight. She twisted her hands nervously, facing him, as he rose, too, with her misty, honest eyes.

"Tell me!" he whispered. "Do you care?"

"Don't," she moaned inarticulately, seeking in her whirling brain for some defence against the man.

They hung there, like this, for the space of several seconds, their hearts beating furiously, caught in a sudden wave of emotion, which drew them inexorably closer, against their reason; which mastered their natures without regard for their feeble human wills. . . .

He drew her to him and kissed her. She murmured in the same weak, defenceless tone as before, — "Don't, not yet."

But she gave herself quite unreservedly to his strong arms. She gave herself with all the perfect self-forgetfulness of an absolutely pure woman who loves and is glad. The little thoughts of self were forgotten, the preconceptions of her training. She was glad to give, to give all, in the joy of giving to him!

The man, having thus done what his reason had counselled him for the past week not to do, what he would have said an hour before was impossible for him to do, came out of the great whelming wave of feeling, and found himself alone upon the dark street under the tranquil canopy of the city smoke. His whole being was at rest after the purification of strong passion, at rest and at peace, with that wonderful sense of poise, of rightness about one's self, which comes when passion is perfect and touches the whole soul. For the fret about his affairs and his uncle's will, in which he had lived for the past week, had vanished with the touch of the girl's lips.

He knew that he had committed himself to a very difficult future by engaging himself to a poor woman and struggling upwards in real poverty, instead of taking the decencies of a comfortable bachelorhood. But there was something inspiring in what had happened, something strangely electrifying to his nerves. He had stooped and caught the masculine burden of life, but he felt his feet a-tingle for the road before him. And, best of all, there was a new reverence in his heart for that unknown woman who had kissed him and taken him to her — for always.

CHAPTER VIII

"HELLO, Jackie!"

Such familiarity of address on the part of Wright's head draughtsman had long annoyed Hart, but this morning, instead of nodding curtly, he replied briskly, —

"Hello, Cookie!"

The draughtsman winked at his neighbor and thrust out an elbow at a derisive angle, as he bent himself over the linen plan he was carefully inking in. The man next to him snickered, and the stenographer just outside the door smiled. An office joke was in the air.

"Mr. Hart looks as though somethin' good had happened to him," the stenographer remarked in a mincing tone. "Perhaps some more of his folks have died and remembered him in their wills."

But Cook dismissed the subject by calling out to one of the men, "Say, Ed, come over here and tell me what you were trying to do with this old hencoop."

He might take privileges with the august F. Jackson Hart, whose foreign training had rather oppressed the office force at times, but he would not allow Gracie Bellows, the stenographer, to "mix" in his joke.

Cook was a spare, black-haired little man, with beady brown eyes, like a squirrel's. He was a pure product of

Wright's Chicago office, having worked his way from a boy's position to the practical headship of the force. Although he permitted himself his little fling at Hart, he was really the young architect's warmest admirer, approving even those magnificent palaces of the French Renaissance type which the Beaux Arts man put forth during the first months of his connection with the firm.

The little draughtsman, who was as sharp as one of his own India ink lines, could see that Hart had something on his mind this morning, and he was curious, in all friendliness, to find out what it was. But Jackson did not emerge from his little box of an office for several hours. Then he sauntered by Cook's table, pausing to look out of the window while he abstractedly lighted a cigarette. Presently the stenographer came up to him and said: —

"Mr. Graves is out there and wants to see you particular, Mr. Hart. Shall I show him into your office?"

"Ask him to wait," the young architect ordered.

After he had smoked and stared for a few moments longer he turned to Cook.

"What did we specify those I-beams for the Canostota? Were they forty-twos or sixties?"

Without raising his hand from the minute lines of the linen sheet, the draughtsman grunted: —

"Don't remember just what. Weren't forty-twos. Nothing less than sixties ever got out of this office, I guess. May be eighties. What's the mattter?"

"Um," the architect reflected, knocking his cigarette

against the table. "It makes a difference in the sizes what make they are, doesn't it?"

"It don't make any difference about the weights!" And the draughtsman turned to his linen sheet with a shrug of the shoulders that said, "You ought to know that much by this time!"

The architect continued to stare out of the murky window.

"When is Harmon coming back?"

"Ed lives out his way, and he says it's a long-term typhoid. You can't tell when he'll be back."

"Has the old man wired anything new about his plans?"

"You'll have to ask Miss Bellows. I haven't heard anything."

"He said he'd be here next Wednesday or Thursday at the latest, didn't he?"

The draughtsman stared hard at Hart, wondering what was in the man's mind. But he made no answer to the last remark, and presently the architect sauntered to the next window.

As Jackson well knew, Graves was waiting to close that arrangement which he had proposed for building an apartment house. The architect had intended to look up the Canostota specifications before he went further with Graves, but he had been distracted by other matters, and had thought nothing more about the troublesome I-beams until this morning.

Jackson Hart was not given to undue speculation over matters of conduct. He had a serviceable code of busi-

ness morals, which hitherto had met all the demands of his experience. He called this code "professional etiquette." In this case he was not clear how the code should be applied. The Canostota was not his affair. It was only by the merest accident that he had been sent there that day to supervise the electricians, and had seen that drill-hole, which had led him to question the thickness of the I-beams, and he might very well have been mistaken about them. If there were anything wrong with them, at any rate, it was Wright's business to see that the contractor was properly watched when the steel work was being run through the mill. And he did not feel any special sense of obligation toward his employer, who had never displayed any great confidence in him.

He wanted the contractor's commission now more than ever, with his engagement to Helen freshly pricking him to look for bread and butter; wanted it all the more because any thought of fighting his uncle's will had gone when Helen had accepted him. It was now clearly his business to provide for his future as vigorously as he could. . . .

When he rang for the stenographer and told her to show Graves into his office, he had made up his mind. Closing his door, he turned and looked into the contractor's heavy face with an air of alert determination. He was about to play his own game for the first time, and he felt the man's excitement of it!

The two remained shut up in the architect's cubby-hole for over an hour. When Cook had returned from the restaurant in the basement where he lunched, and the

other men had taken their hats and coats from the lockers, Hart stepped out of his office and walked across the room to Cook's table. He spread before the draughtsman a fresh sepia sketch, the water scarcely dried on it. It was the front elevation for a house, such a one as is described impressively in the newspapers as "Mr. So-and-So's handsome country residence."

"Now, that's what I call a peach!" Cook whistled through his closed teeth, squinting at the sketch admiringly. "Nothing like that residence has come out of this office for a good long time. The old man don't favor houses as a rule. They're too fussy. Is this for some magnate?"

"This isn't done for the firm," Jackson answered quickly.

"Oh!" Cook received the news with evident disappointment. "Just a fancy sketch?"

"Not for a minute! This is my own business. It's for a Mrs. Phillips — her country house at Forest Park."

Cook looked again at the elevation of the large house with admiring eyes. If he had ever penetrated beyond the confines of Cook County in the state of Illinois, he might have wondered less at Hart's creation. But he was not familiar with the Loire châteaux, even in photographs, for Wright's tastes happened to be early English.

"So you're going to shake us?" Cook asked regretfully.

"Just as soon as I can have a word with Mr. Wright. This isn't the only job I have on hand."

"Is that so? Well, you're in luck, sure enough."

"Don't you want to come in?" Hart asked abruptly.

"I shall want a good practical man. How would you like to run the new office?"

Cook's manner froze unexpectedly into caution.

"Oh, I don't know. It's pretty good up here looking after Wright's business."

Hart picked up his sketch and turned away.

"I thought you might like the chance. Some of the men I knew in Paris may join me a little later, and I shan't have much trouble in making up a good team."

Then he went out to his luncheon, and when he returned, he shut himself up in his box, stalking by Cook's desk without a word. When he came forth again the day's work was over, and the office force had left. Cook was still dawdling over his table.

"Say, Hart!" he called out to the architect. "I don't want you to have the wrong idea about my refusing that offer of yours. I don't mind letting you know that I ain't fixed like most of the boys. I've got a family to look after, my mother and sister and two kid brothers. It isn't easy for us to pull along on my pay, and I can't afford to take any chances."

"Who's asking you to take chances, Cookie?" Hart answered, mollified at once. "Perhaps you might do pretty well by yourself."

"You see," Cook explained further, "my sister's being educated to teach, but she's got two years more at the Normal. And Will's just begun high school. Ed's the only earner besides myself in the whole bunch, and what he gets don't count."

Thereupon the architect sat down on the edge of the

draughting-table in friendly fashion and talked freely of his plans. He hinted at the work for Graves and at his hopes of a large commission from some railroad.

"I have ten thousand dollars in the bank, anyway. That will keep the office going some time. And I don't mind telling you that I have something at stake, too," he added in a burst of confidence. "I am going to be married."

Cook grinned sympathetically over the news. It pleased him vastly to be told of Hart's engagement in this confidential way. After some further talk the matter of the new office was arranged between them then and there. Cook agreed to look into a building that had just pushed its head among the skyscrapers near the Maramanoc, to see if there was anything left in the top story that would answer their purposes. As they were leaving the office, Hart stopped, exclaiming suddenly: —

"I've got to telephone! Don't wait."

"That's always the way," the draughtsman replied. "You'll be telephoning most of the time, now, I expect!"

The architect did not telephone to Helen Spellman, however. He called up his cousin's office to tell Wheeler that he had concluded not to contest the will.

"And, Everett," he said frankly, "I guess I have made rather an ass of myself, telling you I was going to kick up a row. I hope you won't say anything about it."

The lawyer accepted the information without remark, and hung up his telephone. He may have wondered what had brought about this change of heart in his cousin, but later, when the news of the engagement reached him, he

understood. For he knew Helen in a way better than her lover did, — knew her as one knows the desired and unattainable.

A few days later Wright reached the office, and Hart told him of his plan to start for himself, asking for an early release because important business was waiting for his entire attention. Wright had arrived only that morning; he was seated before his broad desk, which was covered to the depth of several inches with blue prints, type-written specifications, and unopened mail. He had been wrestling with contractors and clients every minute since he had entered the office, and it was now late in the afternoon.

"So you are going to try it for yourself?" he commented, a new wrinkle gathering on his clouded brow. It occurred to him that Hart might be merely hinting politely for an advance in salary, but he dismissed the suspicion. "Have you had enough experience?" he asked bluntly.

"I'll be likely to get some more before long!" Hart replied, irritated by the remark.

"I mean of the actual conditions under which we have to build out here, — the contractors, the labor market, and so on? Of course you can leave at once if you wish to. I shouldn't want to stand in your light in any way. It is rather a bad time with Harmon home sick. But we can manage somehow, draw on the St. Paul office if necessary."

Jackson murmured his regret for the inconvenience of his departure at this juncture, and Wright said nothing

more for a few minutes. He remembered now that some one had told him that Hart was drawing plans for Mrs. Phillips. This job had probably made the young architect ambitious to start for himself. He felt that Hart should have asked his consent before undertaking this outside work: at least it would have been more delicate to do so. But Wright was a kindly man, and bore no malice. In what he said next to the young architect he was moved by pure good will.

"I don't want to discourage you, Hart, but I know what sort of luck young fellows, the best of them, have these days when they start a new office. It's fierce work getting business, here especially."

"I suppose so," Hart admitted conventionally.

"The fine art side of the profession don't count much with client or contractor. It's just a tussle all the time!" he sighed, reflecting how he had spent two hours of his morning in trying to convince a wealthy client of the folly of cutting down construction cost from fifty to thirty cents a cubic foot.

"You young fellows just over from the other side don't always realize what it means to run an office. If you succeed, you have no time to think of your sketches, except after dinner or on the train, maybe. And if you don't succeed, you have to grab at every little job to earn enough to pay office expenses."

Hart's blank face did not commit him to this piece of wisdom.

"The only time I ever had any real fun was when I was working for the old firm, in New York. God! I

did some pretty good things then. Old man Post used to trim me down when I got out of sight of the clients, but he let me have all the rope he could. And now, — why it's you fellows who have the fun!"

"And you who trim us down!" Hart retorted, with a grim little smile.

"Well, perhaps. I have to keep an eye on all you Paris men. You come over here well trained, damned well trained, — we can't do anything like it in this country, — but it takes a few years for you to forget that you aren't in la belle France. And some never get over their habit of making everything French Renaissance. You aren't flexible. Some of you aren't creative — I mean," he hastened to explain, getting warm on a favorite topic, "you don't feel the situation here. You copy. You try to express everything just as you were taught. But, if you want to do big work, you have got to feel things for yourself, by thunder!"

Jackson kept his immobile face. It did not interest him to know what Wright thought of the Beaux Arts men. Yet he had no intention of falling out with Wright, who was one of the leading architects of the country, and whose connection might be valuable to him.

"I see you don't care to have me preach," the older man concluded humorously. "And you know your own business best."

He remembered that the Powers Jackson gift for a school would call sooner or later for a large public building. Probably the family interests had arranged to put this important piece of work into Hart's hands. Wright

hoped for the sake of his art that the trustees would put off building until the young architect had developed more independence and firmness of standard than he had yet shown.

"I think I understand a little better than I did two years ago what it takes to succeed here in Chicago," Jackson remarked at last.

Wright shot a piercing glance at him out of his tired eyes.

"It means a good many different kinds of things," the older man said slowly. "Just as many in architecture as elsewhere. It isn't the firm that is putting up the most expensive buildings that is always making the biggest success, by a long shot."

"I suppose not," Hart admitted.

And there the conversation lapsed. The older man felt the real impossibility of piercing the young architect's manner, his imperturbability. "He doesn't like me," he said to himself reproachfully.

For he wanted to say something to the younger man out of his twenty years of experience, something concerning the eternal conflict there is in all the professions between a man's ideals of his work and the practical possibilities in the world we have about us; something, too, concerning the necessity of yielding to the brute facts of life and yet not yielding everything. But he had learned from years of contact with men the great truth that talk never saves a man from his fate, especially that kind of talk. A man lives up to what there is in him, and Jackson Hart would follow the rule.

So he dug his hands into the letters on his desk, and said by way of conclusion: —

"Perhaps we can throw some things your way. There's a little job, now." He held up a letter he had just glanced at. "They want me to recommend some one to build a club-house at Oak Hills. There isn't much in it. They can't spend more than seven thousand dollars. But I had rather take that than do some other things!"

"Thank you!" Hart replied with considerable animation. "Of course I want every chance I can get."

He took the letter from Wright's outstretched hand.

CHAPTER IX

After the few swift months of spring and summer they were to be married, late in the fall.

Meanwhile above the lake at Forest Park, in a broad, open field, Mrs. Phillips's great house was rapidly rising. It was judged variously by those who had seen it, but it altogether pleased the widow; and the architect regarded it — the first independent work of his manhood — with complacency and pride. Helen had not seen it since the walls had passed the first story, when, one day late in September, she made the little journey from the city with the architect, and walked over to the house from the Shoreham station, up the lake road.

It was a still, soft fall day, with all the mild charm of late summer that comes only in this region. The leaves still clung in bronzed masses to the little oaks; a stray maple leaf dipped down, now and then, from a gaudy yellow tree, and sailed like a bird along their path. There was a benediction in the country, before the dissolution of winter, and the girl's heart was filled with joy.

"If we could only live here in the country, Francis!"

"All the year?" he queried doubtfully.

"Yes, always! Even the worst days I should not feel lonely. I shall never feel lonely again, anyway."

As he drew her hand close to his breast, he said contentedly, with a large view of their future: —

"Perhaps we can manage it before long. But land is very dear in this place. Then you have to keep horses and servants, if you want to live comfortably in the country."

"Oh! I didn't think of all that."

They walked slowly, very close together, neither one anxious to reach the misty horizon, where in a bed of opalescent gray lay the beautiful lake. The sunshine and the fruity odors of the good earth, the tranquil vistas of bronze oaks, set the woman brooding on her nesting time, which was so close at hand. And the man was thinking likewise, in his way, of this coming event, anxiously, yet with confidence. The plans for the Graveland, the contractor's big apartment house, were already nearly finished, — and largely paid for. Very soon the office would be idle unless new work came in, but he counted confidently on a number of good things. There were the Rainbows, who had moved to Shoreham, having made a sudden fortune, and were talking of building. Then Mrs. Phillips, he knew, was doing what she could for him with Colonel Raymond. The railroad man had promised to look over the new house some day and meet the architect. Buoyant, convinced of his own ability, he saw the office crowded with commissions!

Suddenly the house shot up before their eyes, big and new in all the rawness of fresh brick and stone. It towered blusteringly above the little oaks, a great red-brick château, with a row of little round windows in its massive, thick-tiled red roof.

Helen involuntarily stood still and caught her breath. So this was his!

"Oh!" she murmured. "Isn't it big, Francis!"

"It's no three-room cottage," he answered, with a little asperity.

Then he led her to the front, where she could get the effect of the two wings, the southerly terrace toward the lake, the sweeping drive, and the classic entrance.

"I know I shall grow to like it, Francis," the girl said loyally. "It must be very pretty inside, with those lovely French windows; and this court is attractive, too."

She felt that she was hurting her lover in his tenderest spot, and she tried anxiously to find better words, to show him that it was only her ignorance which limited her appreciation. They strolled about among the refuse heaps of the builders, viewing the place at every angle in order to get all its effects. Just as they were about to enter the house, there came from the south road the sound of a puffing automobile, and presently Mrs. Phillips arrived in a large touring car, with some people who had been lunching with her at the Shoreham Club. They came slowly up the driveway to the house, talking and joking in a flutter of good-natured comment. The architect recognized instantly the burly form of Colonel Raymond. He was speaking when the car stopped: —

"Well, Louise, you will have to take us all in next season. I didn't know you were putting up a hotel like this."

"Hotel! It is a perfect palace!" exclaimed a short,

plump woman who had some difficulty in dismounting. "I hope you are going to have a pergola. They're so nice. Every country house has a pergola nowadays."

"Why not an English garden and a yew hedge?" added a man who had on the red coat of the Hunt Club. "I hope you will have your stabling up to this, Mrs. Phillips."

Then they recognized the architect and Helen. Mrs. Phillips introduced them to her friends, and they all went inside to make a tour of the rooms. The painters, who were rubbing the woodwork, looked curiously at the invading party; then, with winks among themselves, turned indifferently to their tasks.

The visitors burst into ripples of applause over the hall with its two lofty stone fireplaces, the long drawing-room that occupied the south wing of the house, the octagonal breakfast room and the dining-room in the other wing. The architect led them about, explaining the different effects he had tried to get. He showed his work modestly, touching lightly on architectural points with a well-bred assumption that the visitors knew all about such things. The plump little woman followed close at his heels, drinking in all that he said. Helen wondered who she might be, until, in an eddy of their progress, Hart found a chance to whisper to her, "It's Mrs. Rainbow; she's getting points!"

He seemed very much excited about this, and the general good luck of being able to show these people over the house he had made. After the first floor had been exhausted, the party drifted upstairs in detachments.

Helen, who had loitered after the others, could hear her lover's pleasant voice as he led the way from suite to suite above. The voices finally centred in Mrs. Phillips's bathroom, where the sunken bath and the walls of colored marble caused much joking and laughter. . . .

"Can you tell me if Mrs. Phillips is here?" a voice sounded from the door. Helen turned with a start. The young girl who asked the question was dressed in a riding habit. Outside in the court a small party of people were standing beside their horses. The girl spoke somewhat peremptorily, but before Helen had time to reply, she added more cordially: —

"Aren't you Miss Spellman? I am Venetia Phillips."

Then the two smiled at each other and shook hands in the way of women who feel that they may be friends.

"I was off with my uncle the day you dined with mamma," she continued, "so I missed seeing you. Isn't this a great—barn, I was going to say." She laughed and caught herself. "I didn't remember! Mamma likes it so much. We have just been out with the hounds,—the first run of the season. But it was no fun, so we came on here. It's too early to have a real hunt yet. Do you ride?"

They sat down on the great staircase and were at once absorbed in each other. In the meantime Mrs. Phillips's party had returned from the upper story by the rear stairs, and were penetrating the mysteries of the service quarters. Jackson was showing them proudly all the little devices for which American architecture is famous —the interior telephone service, the laundry shoots, the electric dumb-waiters, the latest driers. These devices

aroused Colonel Raymond's admiration, and when the others came back to the hall he took the architect aside and discussed driers earnestly for several minutes. From that they got to the heating system, which necessitated a visit to the basement.

Mrs. Phillips took this occasion to compliment Helen upon her lover's success: —

"You can be proud of your young man, Miss Spellman. He's done a very successful piece of work. Every one likes it, and it's all his, too," she added generously.

Helen found nothing to say in reply. The widow was not an easy person for her to talk to. On the single other occasion when they had met, in Mrs. Phillips's city house, the two women had looked into each other's eyes, and both had remained cold. The meeting of the two women had not been all that the architect had hoped it might be; for apart from this house which he was building, there were other of his many ambitions in which Mrs. Phillips could be very helpful to them. He did not intend that Helen and he, when they were married, should sink into that dull, retired manner of living that both his mother and Mrs. Spellman seemed to prefer. It would be good business for him to enlarge his acquaintance among the rich as fast as possible.

So this time when Helen found nothing amiable on the tip of her tongue to reply, Mrs. Phillips examined the younger woman critically, saying to herself, "She's a cold piece. She won't hold him long!" . . .

At last the party gathered itself together and left the house. The big touring car puffed up to the door, and

the visitors climbed in, making little final comments of a flattering nature to please the architect, who had charmed them all. He was assiduous to the very end, laughing again at Mrs. Rainbow's joke about the marble tub, which she repeated for the benefit of those who had not been upstairs.

After Hart had helped her to mount the steps of the car, she leaned over and gave him her hand.

"So glad to have met you, Mr. Hart," she said with plump impressiveness. "I am sure if we build, we must come to you. It's just lovely, everything."

"I shall have to give that away to Rainbow," the colonel joked. "There's nothing so bad to eat up money as a good architect."

Then he shook hands cordially with Hart, lit a cigarette, and swung himself to the seat beside Mrs. Phillips. After the car had started, the riders mounted. Hart helped Venetia Phillips to her seat, and slipped in a word about the hunt. But the girl leaned over on the other side toward Helen, with a sudden enthusiasm.

"I do so want to see you again, Miss Spellman! But I suppose you are very busy now."

"Oh, no," Helen protested, blushing at the girl's frank enthusiasm.

"But when you are married, can't I see a lot of you?"

Helen laughed. "Come and see me whenever you will!" she said, and the two held hands for a moment, while the man in the red coat talked with the architect.

When they had all gone, Jackson turned to Helen, a happy smile of triumph on his face.

"It seemed to take!"

There had not been one word of comment on the house itself, on the building as a home for generations of people. But Hart did not seem to notice that. He was flushed with the exhilaration of approval.

"Yes," Helen answered, throwing all the animation she could into the words; "I think they all liked it."

She was silent, her thoughts full of vague impressions gathered from the little incident of the afternoon. There had been revealed to her an unknown side of her lover, a worldly side, which accorded with his alert air, his well-trimmed mustache, and careful attention to dress. He had been very much at home with all these people, while she had felt more or less out of her element. He knew how to talk to them, how to please them, just as he knew how to build a house after their taste for luxury and display. Although he was a poor, hardworking young architect, he could talk hunters or motor cars or bridge whist, as the occasion demanded. Whether it was due to his previous experience or to an instinct for luxury, he was, in fact, very much one of them!

She cast a timid look at the great façade above them, over which the cold shadows of the autumn evening were fast stealing, leaving the building in its nudity still more hard and new and raw. She was glad it was not to be her fate to live there in all its grandeur and stiff luxury.

The architect had to speak to the superintendent of the building, and Helen sat down on the stone balustrade of the terrace to wait for him. The painters were leaving their job, putting on their coats as they hurried from

the house. They scarcely cast a glance her way as they passed out, disappearing into the road, fleeing from the luxurious abode and the silent woods, which were not theirs, to the village and the city. The girl mused idly about them and their lives, and about the other people who had come there this afternoon to look over the house, and about the house itself. She reflected how much more she liked the sketch Jackson had made of a little club-house for the Oak Hills Country Club. It was a rough little affair, the suggestion of which the architect had got from a kodak of a Sicilian farm-house he had once taken. But this great American château was so different from what she had supposed her lover would build, this caravansary for the rich, this toy where they could hide themselves in aristocratic seclusion and take their pleasures. And the thought stole into her mind that he liked it, this existence of the rich and prosperous, their sports and their luxuries, — and would want to earn with the work of his life just their pleasures, their housing, their automobiles and hunters. It was all strange to her experience, to her dreams!

From the second floor there came to her the sound of voices: —

"I tells you, Muster Hart, you got to rip the whoal damn piping out from roof to basement if you wants to have a good yob of it. I tole you that way back six weeks ago. It waren't specified right from the beginning."

"I'll speak to Rollings about it to-morrow and see what can be done."

"That's what you say every time, and he don't do nutting," the Swede growled.

"See here, Anderson! Who's running this job?" . . .

The girl strolled away from the voices toward the bluff, where she could see the gray bosom of the lake. The twilight trees, the waveless lake soothed her: they were real, her world, — she felt them in her soul! The house back there, the men and women of it, were shadows on the marge.

"Nell!" her lover called.

"Coming, Francis."

When he came up to her she rested her head on his shoulder, looking at him with vague longing, desiring to keep him from something not clearly defined in her own mind. Her lover drew her to him and kissed her, once, twice, while her eyes searched his wistfully. She seemed passive and cold in his arms. But suddenly she closed her longing eyes, and her lips met his, hungrily, tensely, in the desire to adore, to love abundantly, which was her whole life.

"We must hurry to get that train, — dear. When we live out here we'll have to sport a motor car, won't we?" he said buoyantly.

She answered slowly, "I don't know that I should want to live just here, after all."

"Why, I thought you were crazy about the country! And I've been thinking it might be the very thing for us to do. There's such a lot of building in these places now since business has looked up. Mrs. Phillips has asked me several times why I didn't move out here on the

shore. Just before she left to-day she said in a joking way that if I wanted to build a lodge for her, I might take it for a year or so. Of course that's a joke. But I know she's bought lately a lot more property on the ravine, and she might be willing to let me have a small bit on reasonable terms. She's been so friendly all along!"

He was still in the flush of his triumph, and talked rapidly of all the plans that opened out before his fervent ambition. Suddenly he took note of the girl's mood and said sharply, "Nell, I believe you don't like her!"

"Why do you say that!" she exclaimed, surprised in her inner thoughts. "I don't really know."

"Why, it's plain enough. You never talk to her. You are always so cold! Louise is a chatty person; she likes to have you make an effort for her. And you treated Mrs. Rainbow in the same way."

"Oh, Francis! I didn't mean to be cold. Ought I to like them if you are to do work for them?"

Her lover laughed at her simplicity. Nevertheless, he felt somewhat disturbed at Helen's indifference to the social aspect of their marriage venture. He wished to make a proper stir in the puddle, and he was beginning to suspect that Helen had little aptitude for this distinctively woman's side of matrimony.

"Rich people always puzzle me," she continued apologetically. "They always have, except uncle Powers, and you never thought of him as rich! I don't feel as if I knew what they liked. They are so much preoccupied with their own affairs. That other time when I met Mrs. Phillips she was very much worried over the break-

fast room and the underbutler's pantry! What is an underbutler's pantry, Francis?"

This raillery over the needs of the rich sounded almost anarchistic to the architect in his present mood, and they walked to the station silently in the gathering darkness. But after a time, on the train, he returned to the events of the afternoon, remarking with no relevancy:—

"She can do anything she likes with Raymond. It would be a big stroke to get that railroad business!"

As Helen made no reply to this observation, they sank again into silent thought.

The night before their marriage the architect told her exultantly that Colonel Raymond had sent for him that afternoon to talk over work for the railroad corporation.

"That's Mrs. Phillips's doing," he told Helen. "You must remember to say something to her about it to-morrow if you get the chance. It's likely to be the biggest wedding present we'll have!"

"I am glad!" Helen replied simply, without further comment.

He thought that she did not comprehend what this good fortune would mean to them. And he was quite mystified when she sent him away and refused to see him again before the ceremony of the following day. He could not realize that in some matters — a few small matters — he had bruised the woman's ideal of him; he could not understand why these last hours, before she took him to her arms forever, she wished to spend alone with her own soul in a kind of prayer. . . .

There were only a few people present at the marriage in the little Maple Street house the next day. Many of their more fashionable friends still lingered away from the city although it was late in October. Mrs. Phillips had made a point of coming to the wedding, even putting off a projected trip to New York, and after much urging she had been made to bring Venetia, who was strangely bent on going to this wedding. Pemberton, an old friend of the Spellmans, who had recently been asked to join the Powers Jackson trustees, was there, and also little Cook, who was the backbone of the new office. Everett Wheeler was the best man. He and Hollister had put off their yearly fishing trip to do honor to Jackson Hart, who had won their approval, because the young man had swallowed his disappointment about the will and was going to marry a poor girl. Hollister and Pemberton had brought Judge Phillips with them, because he was in town and liked weddings and ought to send the pair a goodly gift. Of the presence of all these and some others the young architect was agreeably conscious that October day.

Only that morning, on the way to the house, Everett had referred to the great school building, a monumental affair, which the trustees would have to build some day. He said nothing that might commit the trustees in any way. Nevertheless, it was in the aroma of this new prospect, and of all the other good fortune which had come to him since he had taken up his burden of poverty, that Jackson Hart was married.

But Helen walked up to him to be married, in a dream,

unconscious of the whole world, with a mystery of love in her heart. When the ceremony was over, she looked up into her husband's resolute face, which was slightly flushed with excitement. Venetia, standing by her uncle's side a few steps away, could see tears in the bride's eyes, and the girl wondered in her heart what it meant.

Did the woman know now that the man who stood there face to face with her, her husband, was yet a stranger to her soul? She raised her lips swiftly to him, as if to complete the sacrament, and there before all he bowed his head to kiss her.

Part II

THE STRUGGLE

CHAPTER X

The Lady Venetia de Phillips, as the young woman used to call herself in the doll age, had never set foot in a common street car, or, indeed, in anything more public than a day coach on the suburban train; and in that only because the railroad had not found it profitable to provide as yet in that service a special coach for her class. For Mrs. Phillips, who had known what it was to ride in an Ottumwa buggy, comfortably cushioned by the stout arm of an Ottumwa swain, understood intuitively the cardinal principle of class evolution, which is separation. Therefore she had carefully educated her children according to that principle.

So it happened shortly before Mrs. Phillips had taken possession of her new home that Miss Phillips, wishing to pay a visit to her new friend who lived on the North Side of the city, was driving in her mother's victoria, in dignity, according to her estate. Beside her sat her favorite terrier, Pete, scanning the landscape of the dirty streets through which they were obliged to pass from the South to the North Side. Suddenly, as the carriage turned a corner, Pete spied a long, lank wharf rat, of a kind that did not inhabit his own more cleanly neighborhood. The terrier took one impulsive leap between the

wheels of the victoria, and was off up Illinois Street after the rat. It was a good race; the Lady Venetia's sporting blood rose, and she ordered the coachman to follow. Suddenly there dashed from an alley a light baker's wagon, driven by a reckless youth. Pete, unmindful of the clattering wagon, intent upon his loping prey, was struck full in the middle of his body: two wheels passed diagonally across him, squeezing him to the pavement like an india-rubber ball. For a moment he lay there stretched in the street, and then he dragged himself to the sidewalk, filling the air with hideous howls. The passers-by stopped, but the reckless youth in the baker's wagon, having leaned out to see what damage had been done, grinned, shook his reins, and was off.

Before the coachman had brought the victoria to a full stop Venetia was out and across the street. Pete had crawled into an alley, where he lay in a little heap, moaning. When his mistress tried to gather him into her skirt he whimpered and showed his teeth. Something was radically wrong! The small boys who had gathered advised throwing Pete into the river, and offered to do the deed. But Venetia, the tears falling from her eyes, turned back into the street to take counsel with the coachman. A young man who was hurrying by, swinging a little satchel and whistling to himself, stopped.

"What's up?" he asked, ceasing to whistle at sight of the girl's tears.

Venetia pointed to the dog, and the stranger, pushing the small boys aside, leaned over Pete.

"Gee! he's pretty well mashed, ain't he? Here,

Miss, I'll give him a smell of this and send him to by-by."

He opened his little satchel and hunted for a bottle. Venetia timidly touched his arm.

"Please don't kill him!"

"That's just what I'm going to do, sure thing!" He paused, with the little vial in his hand, and looked coolly at the girl. "You don't want the pup to suffer like that?"

"But can't he be saved?"

The stranger looked again at Pete, then back at Venetia. Finally he tied a handkerchief over the dog's mouth, and began to examine him carefully.

"Let's see what there's left of you after the mix-up, Mr. Doggie. We'll give you the benefit of our best attention and skill, — more'n most folks ever get in this world, — because you are the pet of a nice young lady. If you were just an alley-cat, you wouldn't even get the chloroform. Well, Miss, he'd have about one chance in a hundred, after he had that hind leg cut off."

"Are you a doctor? Do you think that you could cure him? Mamma will be very glad to pay you for your services."

"Is that so?" the stranger remarked. "How do you know that my services don't come too high for your mother's purse? Well, come on, pup! We'll see what can be done for you."

Drawing the improvised muzzle tighter, he gathered Pete up in a little bundle. Then he strode down the street to the west. The coachman drew up beside the curb and touched his hat.

"Won't you get in?" Venetia asked.

"It's only a step or so to my place," he answered gruffly. "You can follow me in the carriage."

But she kept one hand on Pete, and walked beside the stranger until he stopped at an old, one-story, wooden cottage. Above the door was painted in large black letters, "S. COBURN, M.D., PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON."

"May I come in?" the girl asked timidly.

"Sure! Why would I keep you sitting on the door-step?"

Inside there was a little front hall apparently used as a waiting-room for patients. Back of this was a large bare room, occupying the remaining floor space of the cottage, into which the doctor led the way. A wooden bench extended the entire length of this room underneath a row of rough windows, which had been cut in the wall to light the bench. Over in one corner was a cot, with the bedclothes negligently dragging on the floor. Near by was an iron sink. On a table in the centre of the room, carefully guarded by a glass case, was a complex piece of mechanism which looked to the girl like one of the tiresome machines her teacher of physics was wont to exhibit.

"My laboratory," the doctor explained somewhat grandly.

Venetia stepped gingerly across the cluttered floor, glancing about with curiosity. The doctor placed the dog on the table and turned on several electric lights.

"You'll have to help at this performance," he remarked, taking off his coat.

Together they gave Pete an opiate and removed the muzzle. The doctor then turned him over and poked him here and there.

"Well," he pronounced, "Pete has a full bill. Compound fracture, broken rib, and mashed toes. And I don't know what all on the inside. He has a slim chance of limping around on three legs. Shall I give him some more dope? What do you say?"

"Pete was a gamy dog," Venetia replied thoughtfully. "I think he would like to have all his chances."

"Good!" The doctor tossed aside the sponge that he had held ready to give Pete his farewell whiff. He told the girl how to hold the dog, and how to touch the sponge to his nose from time to time. They were absorbed in the operation when the coachman pushed his way into the room.

"What shall I do, Miss, about the horses? Mis' Phillips gave particler instructions I wasn't to stay out after five-thurty. It's most that now."

"Tell him to go home," the doctor ordered. "We'll be an hour more."

"But how shall I get home then?" the girl asked, perplexed.

"On your feet, I guess, same as most folks," the doctor answered, testing a knife on his finger. "And the cars ain't stopped running on the South Side, have they?"

"I don't know. I never use them," Venetia replied helplessly.

The doctor put the knife down beside Pete and

looked at the girl from her head to her feet, a teasing smile creeping over his swarthy face.

"Well, it's just about time for you to find out what they're good for. I'll take you home myself just to see how you like them. You won't get hurt, not a bit. You may go, Thomas!" He waved his hand ironically to the coachman. "And when you go out, be good enough to slip the latch. We have a little business to attend to in here, and don't want to be interrupted."

When the coachman had left, Venetia turned to the doctor with a red face, and copying her mother's most impressive tones, asked: —

"What would you like me to do now, Dr. Coburn?"

"Nothing special. Turn your back if you don't like to see me take a chop out of doggie."

He laughed at her dignity; therefore she kept her face turned resolutely on poor Pete. She could not help being interested in the man as she watched his swift movements. The doctor was stocky and short, black-haired, with a short black mustache that did not disguise the perpetual sardonic smile of his lips. She noticed that his trousers were very baggy and streaked at the bottoms with mud. They were the trousers of a man who, according to her experience, was not a gentleman. The frayed cravat, which showed its cotton filling, belonged to the same category as the trousers. But there was something in the fierce black eyes, the heavy jaw, the nervous grip of the lips when the man was thinking, that awed the girl. The more Venetia looked at him, the more she was afraid of him; not afraid that he would do any harm to

her, but vaguely afraid of his strength, his force. His bare arms were thick and hairy, although the fingers were supple, and he touched things lightly. Altogether he was a strange person in her little world, and somewhat terrifying.

The doctor talked all the time, while he worked swiftly over the dog, describing to the girl just what he was doing. Venetia watched him without flinching, though the tears would roll down her face. She put one hand under Pete's limp head to hold it, as she would have liked to have her head held under the same circumstances. At last the doctor straightened himself and exclaimed: —

"Correct! He's done up in first-class style." He went to the sink and washed his arms and hands. "Yes, Peter is as well patched as if the great Dr. Cutem had done it himself and charged you ten thousand dollars for the job. I donno' but it's better done. And he would have charged you all right!" He gave a loud, ironical laugh and swashed the water over his bare arms. Then he came back to the operating table, wiping his hands and arms on a roller towel that was none too clean.

"You can quit that sponge now, Miss, and I guess doggie won't appreciate the little attention of holding his head yet awhile. He hasn't got to the flower-and-fruit stage yet, have you, eh, purp?"

Venetia stood like a little girl, awkwardly waiting for orders.

"What's your name?" the doctor demanded abruptly.

"Venetia — Venetia Phillips."

"Well, Miss Venetia, you seem fond of animals. Would you like to see my collection?"

Without waiting for an answer he strode to the farther end of the room and opened a trap-door.

"Come over here!"

The girl peeped through the trap-door into the cellar. There, in a number of pens, were huddled a small menagerie of animals, — dogs, cats, guinea-pigs, rabbits.

"What do you do with all of them?" the girl asked, her heart sinking with foreboding.

"Cut 'em up!"

"Cut them up?"

"Sure! And dose 'em. This is an experimental laboratory." The doctor waved his hand rather grandly over the dirty room. "There are not many like it in the city of Chicago, I can tell you. I am conducting investigations, and I use these little fellers."

"It's horrid!" the girl exclaimed, looking apprehensively at Pete.

"Not a bit of it!" The doctor reached down his hand and pulled up a rabbit, a little mangy object, which tottered a few steps and then fell down as if dizzy. "Jack's had fifteen drops of the solution of hydrochlorate of manganese this morning. He looks kind of dopy, don't he? He'll be as smart as a trivet to-morrow. But I guess he's about reached his limit of hydrochlorate, eh, Jack?"

In spite of herself the girl's curiosity was aroused, and when the doctor had returned Jack to his pen, she asked, "What's that queer machine over there?"

"That's to pump things into your body, to squirt medicines into you, instead of dropping them into your tummy loose, as doctors usually do. See? When I stick this long needle into you and work this handle, a little stream of the thing I want to give you is pumped into your body at the right spot. Have you got anything the matter with your liver? I am working on livers just now. Would you like to have me try it on you? No! I thought not. That's why Jack has to take his dose every morning."

He went into his explanation more thoroughly, and they talked of many things that were as wonderful to Venetia, brought up in the modern city of Chicago, as if she had come out of Thibet.

"I suppose I shall have to leave Pete here," she said at last. "May I come to see him sometimes?"

"Sure! As often as you like. I'm generally in afternoons. I'll telephone if the patient's pulse gets feeble or his temperature goes up."

"You needn't make fun of me! And I think I can find my way home alone," she added, as the doctor took his hat from the table and jammed it on his head.

"I said I'd go home with you. I am not going to miss seeing you take that first ride on the cable, not much! Perhaps you won't mind walking across the bridge and up the avenue to the cable line? It's a pretty evening, and it will do you good to take the air along the river."

So the two started for the city and crossed the busy thoroughfare of the Rush Street Bridge just as the twi-

light was touching the murky waters of the river. The girl was uncomfortably conscious that the man by her side was a very shabbily dressed escort. She was glad that the uncertain light would hide her from any of her acquaintances that might be driving across the bridge at this hour. The doctor seemed to be in no hurry; he paused on the bridge to watch a tug push a fat grain boat up the river, until they were almost caught by the turning draw.

"That's a fine sight!" he remarked.

"Yes, the sunset is beautiful," she replied conventionally.

"No! I mean that big vessel loaded with grain. That's what you live on: it's what you are, — that and a lot of dirty cattle over in the pens of the stock yard. That's you, Miss Venetia, — black hair, pink cheeks, and all!"

"What a very materialistic way of looking at life!" Venetia replied severely.

"Lord, child!" the doctor exclaimed ironically. "Who taught you that horrid word?" Then he proceeded to give her a little lecture on the beauties of physiology, which occupied her attention all the way to the cable car, so that she forgot her snobbish anxieties.

The car was crowded, and no one of the tired men who were reading their newspapers was gallant enough to offer her a seat. So she was obliged to stand crowded in a corner, swaying from a strap overhead, while the persistent doctor told her all about the car, the motive power, the operatives, the number of passengers carried

daily, the dispute over the renewal of the franchise for the road, and kindred matters of common concern.

"Now, it's likely enough some of your folks own a block of watered stock in this concern," he concluded in his clear, high voice, that made itself felt above the rattle of the car. "And you are helping to pay them their dividends. Some day, though, maybe the rest of us won't want to go on paying them five cents to ride in their old cars. Then the water will dry up, the stock will go down, and perhaps you'll have one or two dresses less every year. You'll remember then I told you the reason why!"

Venetia had heard enough about stocks and bonds to know that a good deal of the Phillips money was invested in the City Railway. But she had also learned from her earliest youth that it was very vulgar for a man to discuss money matters with a girl. Furthermore, peering about the crowded conveyance, she had caught sight of Porter Howe, one of her brother Stanwood's friends. He was looking at her and the doctor, and she began to feel uncomfortable again. It had never occurred to her that the young men of her class were in the habit of using the street cars, at least until they had reached those assured positions at the head of industry which always awaited them.

So the novelty of the ride in the public car had something of torture in it, and she was glad enough to escape through the front door at Eighteenth Street.

"Won't you come in?" she asked the doctor politely when they came to the formidable pile of red brick where she lived.

"Thanks! I guess not to-day. I don't believe your folks will want me to stay to supper, and I am getting hungry. Hope you enjoyed your ride. Some day I'll come and take you for a trolley ride somewhere else."

He shook her hand vigorously and laughed. Then he started briskly for the city, his hands thrust in his trousers pockets, his black felt hat drawn forward over his brows. But Venetia had barely mounted the first bank of steps before she heard her name called in a loud voice from the street.

"Say, Miss Venetia!"

The doctor was shouting back to her, one hand at the side of his mouth.

"Don't you worry about that pup! I think I can bring him round all right."

She nodded nervously and stepped into the vestibule with a sense of relief from her companion. She knew that Dr. Coburn was what her brother called a "mucker," and her mother spoke of as a "fellow." Yet she felt that there was something in the man to be respected, and this insight, it may be said, distinguished Miss Venetia from her mother and her brother.

CHAPTER XI

Pete was a very sick dog, but as Dr. Coburn boasted, no pampered patient in a private hospital ever had better care. Ultimately he recovered from his operation and went about gayly on three legs, but not until Venetia had made a good many visits to the squalid "laboratory" and had come to feel very much at home among the animals and scientific apparatus that the eccentric young doctor had gathered about him. Mrs. Phillips, naturally, had not consented to these visits to the "dog doctor," as she persisted in calling Pete's saviour, until Venetia had enlisted the services of Helen as chaperon. Then, being very much occupied these days with furnishing the new house, she paid little attention to Venetia's long afternoons spent in the company of the architect's wife.

These visits were, perhaps, the most educational experiences that the girl had ever had. One day she and Helen had watched the doctor take apart the queer-looking pump that occupied the post of honor in the laboratory, examined the delicate valves of the machine, and learned the theory of its use. Once they got courage to witness voluntarily its application on a rabbit. Venetia winced nervously when she saw the long gold

needle sink into the tender breast of the small beast, the muscles relax, the heart stop beating altogether; but she worked one of the valves of the pump steadily as the doctor directed.

"Ain't that quick work!" he shouted enthusiastically. "It didn't take the stuff thirty seconds to strike the right spot."

Venetia nodded her head gravely, as he proceeded step by step in his demonstration. When he finished she asked with a gravity that made Helen smile: —

"Aren't you a very celebrated man?"

Even her world paid some respect to notable achievements in science, and she had heard Judge Phillips speak admiringly of certain recent discoveries by a famous physiologist. The doctor, however, roared with ironic laughter.

"Not celebrated exactly! At the medical societies they call me the crazy fakir. I don't believe there's a first-class doctor in the city who would take the time to look at this machine. They'd want to know first what some feller in Vienna thought about it. I might starve for all the help I've ever had here! Doctors don't want any one to do things on his own hook: they're jealous, just as jealous as women. But I guess I'm going to show 'em a thing or two not in the books. Let me tell you on the quiet, Miss Venetia, — I'm going over to Paris with this pump of mine and show it off in one of their hospitals. Then you'll see something!"

The girl tried to look intelligent.

"If I can convince some Frenchman or German that I

am on to a big idea, why the whole pack of pill-sellers over here will fall into line so quick you can't see 'em."

"Perhaps we shall go over to Paris this summer, too. How I should like to be there when you are, and see you show the pump!"

In her experience there was nothing remarkable in going to Europe: one went to hear an opera, to order a few gowns, to fill out an idle vacation.

"Well, I may have to go steerage, but I'll get there somehow."

While they had been discussing the machine, a small, white-faced man, who looked as if he might be a waiter or some kind of skilled mechanic, had come into the laboratory and nodding to the doctor took a chair at the farther end of the room with the manner of one who was quite at ease in the place. His face, which was aged by illness or care, interested Helen greatly. She watched him while the others talked, wondering what his relation to the doctor could be, whether that of patient or friend. He sat huddled up on his chair, one worn-out boot thrust forward from a ragged trouser leg, curiously scanning the young girl, who seemed in her fresh beauty and rich clothes decidedly out of harmony with the dingy room. When Venetia spoke of going abroad as casually as she might have mentioned going to the country, a sarcastic smile crept over his face. He seemed to possess the full power of patience, as if a varied experience with a buffeting world had taught him to accept rather than to resist. His business there, whatever it might be, could wait, had always waited.

"Hussey, here, is the only feller that I ever found besides myself who has any faith in the old pump," Coburn remarked presently by way of introduction, half turning toward the silent man, and smiling as if he thoroughly enjoyed the joke of having this one convert. "He's always after me to try it on him, — he says he's got something the matter with his lungs, — but I guess it's purely a scientific interest that makes him offer to be the first victim. Gee! Wouldn't I like to take him at his word!"

He worked one of the delicate valves of the machine, squirting through the needle a thin stream of water in the direction of Hussey.

"Why don't you do it then?" the man asked in an indifferent tone. "I'm ready any time you say."

"Ain't he got nerve, now?" the doctor appealed to Venetia, his eyes twinkling sardonically. "Any doctor would tell him for nothing that it was just plain murder to stick that needle into his lungs. If I am wrong, you know, he'd be a goner, bleed to death."

"I guess I ain't built very different from that guinea-pig," the man observed placidly. "And I have seen you put it into one of them often enough."

"Why don't you try it, if he's willing?" Venetia asked the doctor breathlessly.

Helen and Coburn laughed, and even the silent Hussey smiled grimly.

"Maybe, young lady, you wouldn't mind if I tried it on you! Can't you get up a real good heart trouble now?" the doctor quizzed.

"Would it make any particular difference if I hadn't

anything the matter with me?" Venetia asked quickly. "You can put it into me and see what it does, anyway."

"Good nerve!" Coburn laughed admiringly. "See, Mrs. Hart, I've got two converts now. Don't you want to make a third?"

Then bursting into his loud laugh, which seemed to be directed at himself, Coburn walked to the rear of the room, raised a trap-door, and whistled for Pete. He thrust his hand down, caught the dog by the neck, and placed him on the laboratory table for exhibition.

"Nothing worse than a good aristocratic limp, Peter," the doctor pronounced with complacency. "Just come here and look at that ear, Venetia! What do you think of that? It isn't quite the right shade, but I couldn't lay my hands on a terrier that was as dark as Pete."

"What have you done to his ear?" the girl demanded.

"He hadn't much of an ear left, when I came to look him over. So I grafted a new piece on. And I cropped it, too, so it would look like its mate. Pretty neat job?"

"That's why you wouldn't let me see his head when you were changing the bandages!"

"Sure! This ear was to be a real Christmas surprise for a good little girl."

"Poor old Pete!"

"What's the matter with Pete? Don't drop your tears that way. He's forgotten by this time he ever had another leg. Say!" he added abruptly, "what do you think the job's worth?"

"I don't know," Venetia replied a little haughtily. "Please send your bill to mamma."

"And suppose I make it half what Dr. Cutem would charge for doing the same job on you, what would mamma say? Pete's worth half, ain't he, Mrs. Hart?"

"Not to me," Helen answered lightly.

"Well, you'd have thought he was the way she went on about him that afternoon I found them out in the street. But that's the luck of a poor doctor. You do your best, and, the patient cured, the bill seems large!"

The doctor's joke evidently distressed Venetia, who had been taught that it was low to discuss bills. The silent man still smiling to himself over the girl, rose and spoke to the doctor in a low tone. Coburn nodded.

"The same thing? Yes, I'll be over pretty soon."

Then Hussey left the laboratory with a slight nod of his head in the direction of the women. When he had gone and the outer door had banged behind him, the doctor remarked thoughtfully: —

"I guess it isn't just pure interest in science that makes him ready to try the pump."

"Tell me about him," Helen asked quickly.

"He lost his little girl two months ago, — malnutrition, that is to say slow starvation, and I guess his wife's not got long to live. That's why he came in this afternoon. But I can't do anything for her now, nor anybody else. She's just beat out. They came from somewhere in Pennsylvania, a little country place. He's a bookbinder by trade, — does fancy work, — and work gave out in the country, so he tried New York. He had some kind of trouble there with the union and came on here. But he might as well have stayed where he was.

—there ain't anything in this town for him, and the union is after him again. He's been up against it pretty much ever since he started. That's his story."

"Poor woman!" Helen exclaimed, with a quick sense of her own new happiness. "Do you suppose she would like to have me call on her?"

"I don't know. Perhaps she might. But he's rather sour on folks in general," the doctor answered indifferently.

"Where do they live?"

"Out west here a ways on Arizona Avenue."

"I know that district. The River settlement is over there on Arizona Avenue. But I didn't know any Americans lived there. They are mostly Poles or Germans, I thought," Helen added.

"I guess people like the Husseys live most anywhere they can find a hole to crawl into," Coburn answered brusquely. "So you are one of those settlement cranks?"

"I had classes there for a time before I was married," Helen admitted.

"Got sick of it? Found you couldn't scrub up the world in a few weeks, or even a small piece of it? I took you for a woman of too much sense to mix in that foolishness. It might do Venetia here some good, teach her a thing or two. She never rode in a street car till I showed her how."

"I only gave it up when I was going to marry, and my husband thought I was not strong enough," Helen protested stoutly. "But it's the most interesting—"

"See here! Look at this floor. Would it clean it any to pour a spoonful of water here and there? Well, that's what your social settlements with all their statistics and their investigations are doing. I tell you I know because I have been one of them, one of the 'masses.' I have been dirt poor all my life. I lived once for six months in a tenement room with five other men. 'Understanding and sympathy'? Rot! You can't really know anything about folks until you earn your bread as they do, because you have to or starve; and live and eat and marry as they do because you have to. Do you suppose those English know anything about their Hindoos? Well, these settlement folks know just about as much of what the people around them really are as the English know about those darkies they boss."

"But they're trying to understand, to help."

"What's the good of their help? What men need is a chance to help themselves at the pot. And the only way they'll ever get that is to fight for it. Fight the hoggish ones who want the whole loaf. Let 'em get out and fight, same as the people always have had to when they weren't content to starve. Then you'd see what this settlement 'sympathy and understanding' amounts to."

"Fighting never helps."

"Don't it now? What does your science or history tell you? Men have fought in one way or another for pretty nearly everything they've got!"

"Perhaps that is the trouble."

"Not much," he retorted, as if he were trying to convince himself as much as her. "The real fact is, most of the world isn't worth the bother of saving it from its fate. They are refuse junk. Just junk, so many tons of flesh and bone, with not wit enough to hold their appetites. That's why the worst robbers get on top and ride, every time. They always will because they are the best fighters. No, young woman, the ruck of people aren't worth bothering about. Life is the cheapest thing on this planet; pious folks with all their blart can't alter that fact. It's cheap, and mean, and can't fight."

"What's the good of that machine, if it's only fit to mend such bad flesh?"

"You think you've got me," he laughed back. "Now I'll tell you why. I want to show every stupid doctor in this town that I've got a trick worth two of his. All the high-toned doctors have turned me down, every one I ever got at. But I can fight. See? That's why I starve myself and live in this chicken-coop. I could make money enough gassing patients and selling them a lot of wind. Don't you think I could eat well and dress well and be as sleek and fine as the young men Venetia thinks are the right thing? I guess I could. Do you know Dr. Parks on the North Side? Two years ago he offered to take me into his office if I would quit fooling with these experiments and devote myself to private practice. Parks is earning a good twenty thousand a year. The pickings in that office would be considerable, I guess."

"But you wanted something better than money!"

"Better? I don't know about that. I want Parks and all the other big-mouths in the profession just salaming there before me for one thing."

"No, — that isn't much better than wanting money. You don't want to help. To want to help, to care about helping, that's the best thing in men and women, — caring to help others whether what they do succeeds in the end or fails. Nobody can know that."

The doctor's face lost its ironical grin; he looked at Helen very gravely.

"That feeling you talk about must be a kind of extra sense which I haven't got. It's like the color nerve or the sound nerve. I've always been color-blind. In the same way I haven't that other feeling you talk about. And I guess most folks in this world are like me. If they felt like you, why it wouldn't be the same old world we know."

"It must be a cruel world of murder and hate, if you haven't that."

"Well, I guess it's pretty much the same world that old Michael Angelo saw when he got up in the morning, or Julius Cæsar, or any of the rest of them. It's a mighty lively sort of place, too, if you know how to forage for yourself."

Venetia, who had been listening to the discussion wide-eyed, burst out explosively: —

"What are you two scrapping about, anyway? Aren't you going to see that sick woman?"

"Right you are," Dr. Coburn laughed. "I'll have to trot over there pretty soon."

"And I am going to see her, too, if you'll give me the address," Helen added. "By the way, Dr. Coburn, you know my husband, don't you?"

A peculiar look passed over the doctor's face as he replied: "Yes, in a way. I used to be chore-boy in the chemical lab when he was in college. But I wasn't his sort."

Helen recollected Jackson's exclamation when she had told him of her first visit with Venetia to the doctor's office. "That scrub!" Jackson had commented, simply and finally.

There was an awkward pause, which Venetia broke by saying, "I can take Pete, can't I?"

"I suppose he's well enough," Coburn answered reluctantly. It was plain that he would like to have some excuse to put off Pete's departure. The bit of friendship with the two women, which fate had tossed him, was too precious to part with easily. He picked the dog up brusquely, saying: "Pete, you are getting skinny. I guess it's time for you to go back to the good living you're used to. Don't you be getting into another mix-up, though, or there won't be enough dog left to patch."

Pete licked his hand in a puppyish way, as Coburn carried him to the carriage and placed him carefully on the seat between Venetia and Helen.

"Won't you come to see us?" Helen asked, as they shook hands. The queer look came back to the doctor's face.

"No," he said brusquely, "I guess not. I hope to see you again, though."

"Why do you suppose he said that?" Venetia inquired quickly when they had started.

Helen blushed, as she answered slowly, "Perhaps he doesn't like my husband."

"Don't you think he's the most interesting man you ever saw?" the girl exclaimed breathlessly. "At first he frightened me; he said such queer things — things people don't say, just think them. But I like it now. I mean to see a lot more of him somehow."

"Will you get your mother to ask him to Forest Park?" Helen asked mischievously.

"Just imagine it! Wouldn't Mrs. Phillips be nice to him? They'd have a fight the first thing, if she even looked at him. But I am sure he's the most interesting man I ever met. He's lots nicer than Stanwood's friends. They are always trying to hold your hand and wanting to kiss you. It makes up for conversation."

"Venetia!" the older woman protested.

"Well, they do! And when I told mamma once, she said that a girl could always manage men if she wanted to."

As the carriage stopped at the apartment house where the Harts lived, the girl impulsively kissed the older woman.

"I'm so glad I know you — and the doctor, too!"

That evening when Helen sat down to dinner with her husband in their little apartment, she recounted the events of her day, among them the visit to Dr. Coburn's office. Jackson, who had brought home with him a roll

of plans to work at in the evening, remarked casually: "Isn't Venetia going there a good deal? Her mother won't like that sort of intimacy."

"I don't think there is any harm in it. Dr. Coburn interests her, opens her eyes to things she never realized before. I think he must have a good deal of ability, though he is boastful and rough."

"That kind usually are conceited," the architect replied indifferently. "He had better show a little of his ability in getting some paying patients. He can't be doing much, judging by the boots and hat he had on the last time I saw him."

"No, he is very poor," Helen admitted. She disliked to have her husband judge any man by his "boots and hat." These necessary articles of clothing seemed to her rather accidental aspects of humanity in the confusing fortunes of life.

"Would you mind very much," she ventured after a time, "calling on him? I want to ask him to dine with us some Sunday. I want to have Venetia, and Pete, too."

Jackson looked at his wife in surprise.

"If you wish it, of course. I don't see much point to it. Why do you want him? He isn't our kind."

She was becoming gradually conscious that her husband liked only the society of his kind — those people who had the same tastes and habits, whose views and pleasures he shared. When she thought of it, she realized that they had rapidly severed themselves from any other kind during the first few months of their married life. She had given up going to the River

settlement before her marriage, partly because Jackson disapproved of settlements. They were "socialistic" and "cranky," and business men told him that they helped to stir up that discontent among the laboring classes which was so rife in Chicago. They encouraged the unions, and with people of his class trade-unionism was considered to be the next worst thing to anarchy. So in the desire to have no shadow of difference between them, Helen had given up her classes in the settlement and rarely returned to the friends she had made in that part of the city.

There was growing in her, however, something almost of revolt against this attitude on the part of her husband. There came back to her these days with singular insistence some earnest words which once had thrilled her: "We are bound to one another inseparably in this life of ours; we make a society that is a composite. Whatever we may do to weaken the sense of that common bond disintegrates society. Whatever we can do to deepen the sense of that bond makes life stronger, better for all!" This idea fed an inner hunger of spirit which her husband had not appeased. For she had in large measure that rare instinct for democracy, the love of being like others in joy and sorrow.

Jackson believed in charitable effort, and had urged her to accept an invitation to join the committee of women who managed St. Isidore's hospital. It was almost a fashionable club, this committee, and it was a flattering thing for a young married woman to be made a member of it. The hospital was under the special patronage of

the Crawfords and the Fosters and other well-known people in the city. And when after a visit to the bookbinder's sickly wife, she wished to do something for Hussey, Jackson interested himself in her effort to get together a class of young married women to learn the art of bookbinding, which happened to be a part of the current enthusiasm over craftsmanship. This class met at various houses once a week and spent a morning trying to bind paper-covered literature under Hussey's direction. Jackson, who was a bit of a dilettante by nature, was much interested in the work of the class. He would like to have Helen try her hand in metal-work or design jewellery or wall-paper or model. Once he talked to the class on the minor arts, talked with great enthusiasm and charm, exhorting these young women of the leisure class to cultivate intensively some one artistic interest in life.

But Helen, who hoped soon to have a child, found these things more or less trivial.

CHAPTER XII

After a winter in the city the Harts went to live at Shoreham, taking rooms for the season in a cottage near the club. The new station which the railroad was building at Eversley Heights, and the Rainbows' cottage on the ridge just west of the club, had brought the architect considerable reputation. His acquaintance was growing rapidly among the men who rode to and fro each day on the suburban trains of the C. R. and N. It was the kind of acquaintance which he realized might be very valuable to him in his profession.

Between Chicago and Shoreham there was a long line of prosperous suburbs, which exhibited a considerable variety of American society. As the train got away from the sprawling outskirts of the city, every stop marked a pause in social progress. Each little town gathered to itself its own class, which differed subtly, but positively, from that attracted by its neighbor. Shoreham was the home of the hunting set, its society centring in the large club. At Popover Plains there was a large summer hotel, and therefore the society of Popover Plains was considered by her neighbors as more or less "mixed." Eversley Heights was still undeveloped, the home of a number of young people,

who were considered very pleasant, even incipiently smart. But of all the more distant and desirable settlements Forest Park had the greatest pride in itself, being comparatively old, and having large places and old-fashioned ugly houses in which lived some people of permanent wealth. At these latter stations many fashionable traps were drawn up at the platforms to meet the incoming afternoon trains, and the coachmen, recognizing their masters, touched their hats properly with their whips. Farther down the line there were more runabouts, and they were driven by wives freshly dressed, who were expecting package-laden husbands. Still nearer the city, the men who tumbled out of the cars to the platform found no waiting carriages, and only occasionally a young woman in starched calico awaited her returning lord.

Nevertheless, all these suburban towns had one common characteristic: they were the homes of the prosperous, who had emerged from the close struggle in the city with ideals of rest and refreshment and an instinct for the society of their own kind. Except for a street of shops near the stations, to which was relegated the service element of life, the inhabitants of these suburbs got exclusively the society of their kind.

The architect went to the city by one of the earlier trains and came back very late. He had all the labor of supervising the construction of his buildings, for the work in the office did not warrant engaging a superintendent. He emerged from the city, after a day

spent in running about here and there, with a kind of speechless listlessness, which the wife of a man in business soon becomes accustomed to. But the dinner in the lively dining-room of the club-house, with the chatter about sport and the gossip, the cigar afterward on the veranda overlooking the green, turfy valley golden in the afterglow of sunset, refreshed him quickly. He was always eager to accept any invitation, to go wherever they were asked, to have himself and his wife in the eyes of their little public as much as possible. His agreeable manners, his keen desire to please, his instinct for the conventional, the suitable, made him much more popular than his wife, who was considered shy, if not positively countrified. As the season progressed, Jackson was sure that they had made a wise choice of a place to settle in, and they began to look for a house for the winter.

These were the happiest months the architect had ever known. He was having the exquisite pleasure that a robust nature feels in the first successful bout with life. Then blows, even, are sweet, and the whole brutal surge of the struggle. The very step of him these days as he turned in at his club for a hurried luncheon, his air of polite haste, a quick, hearty manner of greeting the men he knew, proclaimed him as one who had taken his part in the game. The song of the great city sang in his ears all the day, with a sweeter, minor note of his love that was awaiting him.

Yet there were grave risks, anxieties, that pressed as the months passed. In spite of all the apparent pros-

perity which the little office enjoyed from the start, the profit for the first year was startlingly small. The commission from the Phillips house had long since been eaten; also as much of the fee from Graves as that close contractor could be induced to pay over before the building had been finished. The insatiable office was now devouring the profits from the railroad business. Such commissions as he had got in Forest Park and Shoreham were well-earned: the work was fussy, exacting, and paid very little. When Cook saw the figures, he spoke to the point: "It's just self-indulgence to build houses. We must quit it." If they were to succeed, they must do a larger business, — factories, mills, hotels, — work that could be handled on a large scale, roughly and rapidly.

The Harts were living beyond their means, not extravagantly, but with a constant deficit which from the earliest weeks of their marriage had troubled Helen. Reared in the tradition of thrift, she held it to be a crime to spend money not actually earned. But she found that her husband had another theory of domestic economy. To attract money, he said, one must spend it. He insisted on her dressing as well as the other women who used the club, although they were for the most part wives and daughters of men who had many times his income. At the close of the first ten months of their marriage Helen spoke authoritatively: —

"At this rate we shall run behind at least two thousand dollars for the year. We must go back to the city to live at once!"

They had been talking of renting the Loring place in Forest Park for the coming year. But she knew that in the city she could control the expenditure, the manner of living. The architect laughed at her scruples, however.

"I'll see Bushfield to-day and find out when they are to get at the Popover station."

She still looked grave, having in mind a precept that young married people, barring sickness, should save a fifth of their income.

"And if that isn't enough," her husband added, "why, we must pull out something else. There's lots doing."

He laughed again and kissed her before going downstairs to take the club 'bus. His light-hearted philosophy did not reassure her. If one's income was not enough for one's wants, he said — why, expand the income! This hopeful, gambling American spirit was natural to him. He was too young to realize that the point of expansion for professional men is definitely limited. A lawyer, a doctor, an architect, has but his one brain, his one pair of hands, his own eyes — and the scope of these organs is fixed by nature.

"And we give to others so little!" she protested in her heart that morning. Her mother had given to their church and to certain charities always a tenth of their small income. That might be a mechanical, old-fashioned method of estimating one's dues to mankind, but it was better than the careless way of giving when it occurred to one, or when some friend who could not be denied demanded help. . . .

The architect, as he rode to the early morning train

in the club 'bus, was talking to Stephen Lane, a rich bachelor, who had a large house and was the chief promoter of the Hunt Club. Lane grumbled rather ostentatiously because he was obliged to take the early train, having had news that a mill he was interested in had burned down overnight.

"You are going to rebuild?" the architect asked.

"Begin as soon as we can get the plans done," Lane replied laconically.

It shot into the architect's mind that here was the opportunity which would go far to wipe out the deficit he and Helen had been talking about. With this idea in view he got into the smoking car with Lane, and the two men talked all the way to town. Hart did not like Stephen Lane; few at the club cared for the rich bachelor, whose manners carried a self-consciousness of wealth. But this morning the architect looked at him from a different angle, and condoned his tone of patronage. Yet the mill would mean only a few hundred dollars, a mere pot-boiling job, that in his student days he would have scorned, something that Cook or a new draughtsman might bite his teeth on! As the train neared the tangled network of the city terminal, he ventured to say, "What architects do your work, Lane?"

He hated the sound of his voice as he said it, though he tried to make it impersonal and indifferent. Lane's voice seemed to change its tone, something of suspicion creeping in, as he replied: —

"I have always had the Stearns brothers. They do that sort of thing pretty well."

As they mounted the station stairs, Lane asked casually: "Do you ever do that kind of work? It isn't much in your line."

"I've never tried it, but of course I should like the chance."

Then Lane, one hand on the door of a waiting cab, remarked slowly: "Well, we'll talk it over perhaps. Where do you lunch?" and gave the architect two fingers of his gloved hand.

He was thinking that Mrs. Hart was a pleasant woman, who always listened to him with a certain deference, and that these Harts must be hard put to it, without old Jackson's pile.

Hart went his way on foot, a taste of something little agreeable in his mouth. That same morning he had to stop at the railroad offices to see the purchasing agent. The railroad did its own contracting, naturally, and it was through this man Bushfield that the specifications for the buildings had to pass. The architect had had many dealings with the purchasing agent, and had found him always friendly. This morning Bushfield was already in his office, perspiring from the August heat, his coat off, a stenographer at his elbow. When Hart came in he looked up slowly, and nodded. After he had finished with the stenographer, he asked: —

"Why do you specify Star cement at Eversley, Hart?"

"Oh, it's about the best. We always specify Star for outside work."

"How's it any better than the Climax?" the purchasing agent asked insistently.

"I don't know anything about the Climax. What's the matter with Star?"

Bushfield scratched his chin thoughtfully for a moment.

"I haven't got anything against Star. What I want to know is what you have got against Climax?"

The smooth, guttural tones of the purchasing agent gave the architect no cause for suspicion, and he was dull enough not to see what was in the air.

"It would take time to try a new cement properly," he answered.

The purchasing agent picked up his morning cigar, rolled it around in his mouth, and puffed before he replied: —

"I don't mind telling you that it means something to me to have Climax used at Eversley. It's just as good as any cement on the market. I give you my word for that. I take it you're a good friend of mine. I wish you would see if you can't use the Climax."

Then they talked of other matters. When Hart got back to the office he looked up the Climax cement in a trade catalogue. There were hundreds of brands on the market, and the Climax was one of the newest. Horace Bushfield, he reflected, was Colonel Raymond's son-in-law. If he wished to do the Popover station, he should remain on good terms with the purchasing agent of the road. Some time that day he got out the type-written specifications for the railroad work, and in the section on the cement work he inserted neatly in ink the words, "Or a cement of equal quality approved by the architect."

He had scarcely time to digest this when not many days later the purchasing agent telephoned to him: —

"Say, Hart, the Buckeye Hardware people have just had a man in here seeing me about the hardware for that building. I see you have specified the Forrest makes. Aren't the Buckeye people first-class?"

The architect, who knew what was coming this time, waited a moment before replying. Then he answered coolly, "I think they are, Bushfield."

"Well, the Buckeye people have always done our business, and they couldn't understand why they were shut out by your specifying the Forrest makes. You'll make that all right? So long."

As Hart hung up his receiver, he would have liked to write Raymond, the general manager, that he wanted nothing more to do with the railroad business. Some weeks later when he happened to glance over the Buckeye Company's memoranda of sales for the Eversley station, and saw what the railroad had paid for its hardware, he knew that Horace Bushfield was a thief. But the purchasing agent was Colonel Raymond's son-in-law, and the railroad was about to start the Popover station!

Something similar had been his experience with the contractor Graves.

"Put me up a good, showy building," the contractor had said, when they first discussed the design. "That's the kind that will take in that park neighborhood. People nowadays want a stylish home with elevator boys in uniform. . . . That court you've got there between the

wings, and the little fountain, and the grand entrance, — all just right. But they don't want to pay nothin' for their style. Flats don't rent for anything near what they do in New York. Out here they want the earth for fifty, sixty dollars a month; and we've got to give 'em the nearest thing to it for their money."

So when it came to the structure of the building, the contracter ordered the architect to save expense in every line of the details. The woodwork was cut to the thinnest veneer; partitions, even bearing-walls, were made of the cheapest studding the market offered; the large floors were hung from thin outside walls, without the brick bearing-walls advised by the architect. When Hart murmured, Graves said frankly: —

"This ain't any investment proposition, my boy. I calculate to fill the Graveland in two months, and then I'll trade it off to some countryman who is looking for an investment. Put all the style you want into the finish. Have some of the flats Flemish, and others Colonial, and so on. Make 'em smart."

The architect tried to swallow his disgust at being hired to put together such a flimsy shell of plaster and lath. But Cook, who had been trained in Wright's office, where work of this grade was never accepted, was in open revolt.

"If it gets known around that this is the style of work we do in this office, it'll put us in a class, and it ain't a pleasant one, either. . . . Say, Jack, how's this office to be run — first-class or the other class?"

"You know, man," the architect replied, wincing at

the frank speech, "how I am fixed with Graves. I don't like this business any better than you do, but we'll be through with it before long; and I shan't get into it again, I can tell you."

He growled in his turn to the contractor, who received his protest with contemptuous good humor.

"You'd better take a look at what other men are doing, if you think I am making the Graveland such an awful cheap building. I tell you, there ain't money in the other kind. Why, I worked for a man once who put up a first-class flat building, slow-burning construction, heavy woodwork, and all that. It's old-fashioned by this — and its rents are way down. And I saw by the paper the other day that it was sold at the sheriff's sale for not more than what my bill came to! What have you got to say to that?"

Therefore the architect dismissed the Graveland from his mind as much as he could, and saw little of it while it was under construction, for the contractor did his own superintending. One day, however, he had occasion to go to the building, and took his wife with him. They drove down the vast waste of Grand Boulevard; after passing through that wilderness of painful fancies, the lines of the Graveland made a very pleasant impression.

Hart had induced Graves to sacrifice part of his precious land to an interior court, around which he had thrown his building like a miniature château, thus shutting out the sandy lots, the ragged street, which looked like a jaw with teeth knocked out at irregular intervals. A heavy wall joined the two wings on the street side,

and through the iron gates the Park could be seen, just across the street.

"Lovely!" Helen exclaimed. "I'm so glad you did it! I like it so — so much more than the Phillips house."

They studied it carefully from the carriage, and Hart pointed out all the little triumphs of design. It was, as Helen felt, much more genuine than the Phillips house. It was no bungling copy, but an honest answer to a modern problem — an answer, to be sure, in the only language that the architect knew.

Helen wanted to see the interior, although Jackson displayed no enthusiasm over that part of the structure. And in the inside came the disaster! The evidences of the contractor's false, flimsy building darkened the architect's brow.

"The scamp!" he muttered, emerging from the basement. "He's propped the whole business on a dozen or so 'two-by-fours.' And I guess he's put in the rottenest plumbing underground that I ever saw. I don't believe it ever had an inspection."

"Show me what you mean," Helen demanded.

He pointed out to her some of the devices used to skimp the building.

"Even the men at work here know it. You can see it by the way they look at me. Why, the thing is a paper box!"

In some of the apartments the rough work was scarcely completed, in others the plasterers were at work; but the story was the same everywhere.

"I can't see how he escaped the Building Department. He's violated the ordinances again and again. But I suppose he knows how to keep the inspectors quiet."

He remembered the Canostota: he had no manner of doubt, now, about those I-beams in the Canostota.

"Francis!" Helen exclaimed with sudden passion; "you won't stand it? You won't let him do this kind of thing?"

The architect shrugged his shoulders.

"It's *his* building. He bought the plans and paid for them."

She was silent, troubled in her mind by this business distinction, but convinced that wrong was being done. A thing like this, a fraud upon the public, should be prevented in some way.

"Can't you tell him that you will report him to the Building Department?" she asked finally.

Hart smiled at her impetuous unpracticality.

"That would hardly do, would it, to go back on a client like that? It's none of my business, really. Only one hates to feel that his ideas are wasted on such stuff as this is made of. The city should look after it. And it's no worse than most of these flat buildings. Look at that one across the street. It's the same cheap thing. I was in there the other day. . . . No, it's the condition of things in this city, — the worst place for good building in the country. Every one says so. But God help the poor devils who come to live here, if a fire once gets started in this plaster-and-lath shell!"

He turned to the entrance and kicked open the door

in disgust. Helen's face was pale and set, as if she could not dismiss the matter thus lightly.

"I never thought of fire!" she murmured. "Francis, if anything like that should happen! To think that you had drawn the plans!"

"Oh! it may last out its time," he replied reassuringly. "And it doesn't affect the appearance of the building at present. It's real smart, as Mrs. Rainbow would say. Don't you think so, Nell?"

She was standing with her back to the pleasant façade of the Graveland, and was staring into the Park across the street. Turning around at his words she cast a swift, scrutinizing glance over the building.

"It isn't right! I see fraud looking out of every window. It's just a skeleton covered with cloth."

The architect laughed at her solemnity. He was disgusted with it himself; it offended his workman's conscience. But he was too modern, too practical, to allow merely ideal considerations to upset him. And, after all, in his art, as in most arts, the effect of the work was two-thirds the game. With her it was altogether different. Through all outward aspect, or cover, of things pierced their inner being, from which one could not escape by illusion.

As they were leaving the place the contractor drove up to the building for his daily inspection. He came over to the architect, a most affable smile on his bearded face.

"Mrs. Hart, I presume," he said, raising his hat. "Looking over your husband's work? It's fine, fine, I tell you! Between ourselves, it beats Wright all out."

Helen's stiffness of manner did not encourage cordiality, and Graves, thinking her merely snobbish, bowed to them and went into the building.

"You'll never do anything for him again, will you, Francis? Promise me."

And he promised lightly enough, for he thought it highly improbable that the contractor ever would return to him, or that he should feel obliged to take his work if he offered it.

Nevertheless, the contractor did return to the office, and not long afterward. It was toward the end of the summer, when the architect and his wife were still debating the question of taking a house in the country for the winter. One afternoon Jackson came back from his luncheon to find Graves waiting for him in the outer office. The stenographer and Cook were hard at work in the room beyond, with an air of having nothing to say to the contractor. As Graves followed Hart into his private office, Cook looked up with a curl on his thin lips that expressed the fulness of his heart.

"Say," Graves called out as soon as Hart had closed the door to the outer room, "I sold that Graveland three weeks ago, almost before the plaster was dry. A man from Detroit came in to see me one morning, and we made the deal that day."

"Is that so?" Hart remarked coolly.

"It was a pretty building. I knew I shouldn't have any trouble with it. Now I have something new in mind."

The architect listened in a non-committal manner.

"Part of that trade with the Detroit feller was for a big block of land out west here a couple of miles. I am thinking of putting up some tidy little houses to sell on the instalment plan."

"What do you mean to put into them?" Jackson asked bluntly.

"Well, they'd ought to sell for not more than eight thousand dollars."

"And cost as much less as you can make them hold together for? I don't believe I can do anything for you, Mr. Graves," Jackson replied firmly.

"Is that so? Well, you are the first man I ever saw who was too busy to take on a paying piece of business."

He settled himself more comfortably in the chair opposite Hart's desk, and began to describe his scheme. There was to be a double row of houses, three stories and basement, each one different in style, in a different kind of brick or terra cotta, with a distinguishing "feature" worked in somewhere in the design. They were to be bait for the thrifty clerk, who wanted to buy a permanent home on the instalment plan rather than pay rent. There were many similar building schemes in different parts of the city, the advertisements of which one might read in the street cars.

"Why do you want me to do the job for you?" Hart asked at last. "Any boy just out of school could do what you are after."

"No, he couldn't! He hasn't the knack of giving a

fresh face to each house. But it won't be hard work for you!"

This, the architect knew, was true. It would be very easy to have Cook hunt up photographs from French and English architectural journals, which with a little arrangement would serve for the different houses. With a few hours' work he could turn out that individual façade which Graves prized commercially. Here was the large job that could be done easily and roughly, opportunely offering itself.

"I don't like to have such work go through the office. That's all there is about it!" he exclaimed at last.

"Is that so? Too tony already. Well, we won't fight over that. Suppose you make the sketches and let another feller prepare the details?"

There were many objections to this mode of operation, but the contractor met every one. Hart himself thought of Meyer, a clever, dissipated German, to whom he had given work now and then when the office was busy. Meyer would do what he was told and say nothing about it.

It was late when Graves left the office. Cook and the stenographer had already gone. Hart went down into the street with the contractor, and they nodded to each other when they parted, in the manner of men who have reached an understanding. On the way to the train, Jackson dropped into his club for a drink. He stood staring into the street while he sipped his gin and bitters. The roar of the city as it came through the murky windows seemed to him more than commonly

harsh and grating. The gray light of the summer evening filtered mournfully into the dingy room. . . . He was not a weak man; he had no qualms of conscience for what he had made up his mind that afternoon to do. It was disagreeable, but he had weighed it against other disagreeable alternatives which might happen if he could not get the money he needed. His child would be born in a few months, and his wife must have the necessary comforts during her illness. He had too much pride to accept Helen's plan of going to her mother's house for her confinement. By the time he had reached Shoreham he had entirely adjusted his mind to Graves, and he met his wife, who had walked over to the station, with his usual buoyant smile. And that evening he remarked: —

"I guess we had better take the Loring place. It's the only fit one for rent. We'll have to keep a horse — that's all."

They had been debating this matter of the Loring place for several weeks. It was a pleasant old house, near the lake, not far from Mrs. Phillips's in Forest Park. It was Mrs. Phillips who had first called the architect's attention to it. But, unfortunately, it was too far from either station of the railroad to be within walking distance. And it was a large establishment for two young persons to maintain, who were contemplating the advent of a baby and a nurse.

All this Helen had pointed out to her husband, and lately they had felt too poor to consider the Loring place.

"What has happened, Francis?" she asked.

"A lot more business has come in,—a block of houses. They will be very profitable," he answered vaguely, remembering Helen's antipathy to the contractor. "Did you lunch with Venetia? I saw her this morning at the station. She is growing up fast, isn't she?"

CHAPTER XIII

Two years passed and they were still living in the Loring place, which the architect had remodelled comfortably to suit his modern taste. Occasionally he talked of building, and they looked at land here and there. But it was clearly out of the question at present, for each year the family budget went leaping upward, and the income came tagging after.

"Jack," so Everett Wheeler expressed the situation in the raw phrase of the ordinary man, "Jack's got a champagne appetite. But he's a pretty good provider."

The architect was a good provider: he enjoyed heartily the luxury that his money brought him, and he wanted his wife to enjoy it with him. He worked at high pressure and needed his bread and meat well seasoned with excitement. Once, early in their married life, Mrs. Phillips had volunteered to explain to Helen the philosophy of this masculine temperament.

"Some men need more food than others. They'd mope and grow thin if they dined at home on a chop and went to bed at ten every night. They must have something to make steam. Your young man was born to be a spender."

The second winter the Phillipses had gone to Europe, where the widow was still adding to her collection for the new house, — Forest Manor as she had dubbed it. Leaving Venetia in Paris with some friends, she had descended upon Italy, the rage for buying in her soul. There she gathered up the flotsam of the dealers, — marbles, furniture, stuffs, — a gold service in Naples, a vast bed in Milan, battered pictures in Florence. Mrs. Phillips was not a discriminating amateur; she troubled her soul little over the authenticity of her spoil. To San Giorgio, Simonetti, Richetti, and their brethren in the craft she came like a rich harvest, and they put up many a prayer for her return another season.

In March of that year, Jackson Hart, struggling with building strikes in Chicago, had a cablegram from the widow. "Am buying wonderful marbles in Florence. Can you come over?" The architect laughed as he handed the message to his wife, saying lightly, "Some one ought to head her off, or she'll be sending over a shipload of fakes." Helen, mindful of the widow's utterances about Jackson, and thinking that he needed the vacation after two years of hard work, urged him generously to accept the invitation and get a few weeks in Italy. But there was no time just then for vacation · he was in the grip of business, and another child was coming to them.

From time to time Mrs. Phillips's purchases arrived at Forest Park and were stored in the great hall of her house. Then late in the spring the widow telephoned the architect.

"Yes, I am back," came her brisk, metallic tones from the receiver. "Glad to be home, of course, with all the dirt and the rest of it. How are you getting on? I hear you are doing lots of things. Maida Rainbow told me over there in Paris that you were building the Bushfields an immense house. I am so glad for you—I hope you are coining money."

"Not quite that," he laughed back.

"I want you to see all the treasures I have bought. I've ruined myself and the children! However, you'll think it's worth it, I'm sure. You must tell me what to do with them. Come over Sunday, can't you? How is Mrs. Hart? Bring her over, too, of course."

Thus she gathered him up on her return with that dexterous turn of the wrist which exasperated her righteous brother-in-law. On the Sunday Jackson went to see the "treasures," but without Helen, who made an excuse of her mother's weekly visit. He found the widow in the stable, directing the efforts of two men servants in unpacking some cases.

"Ah, it's you! How are you?"

She extended a strong, flexible hand to Hart, and with the other motioned toward a marble that was slowly emerging from the packing straw.

"Old copy of a Venus, the Syracuse one. It will be great in the hall, won't it?"

"It's ripping!" he exclaimed warmly. "But where did you get that picture?"

"You don't like it?"

"Looks to be pure fake."

"And Simonetti swore he knew the very room where it's hung for over a hundred years."

"Oh, he probably put it there himself!"

"Come into the house and see the other things. I have some splendid chairs."

For an hour they examined the articles she had bought, and the architect was sufficiently approving to satisfy Mrs. Phillips. Neither one had a pure, reticent taste. Both were of the modern barbarian type that admires hungrily and ravishes greedily from the treasure house of the Old World what it can get, what is left to get, piling the spoil helter-skelter into an up-to-date American house. Mediæval, Renaissance, Italian, French, Flemish — it was all one! Between them they would turn Forest Manor into one of those bizarre, corrupt, baroque museums that our lavish plunderers love, — electric-lighted and telephoned, with gilded marble fireplaces, massive bronze candelabra, Persian rugs, Gothic choir stalls, French bronzes — a house of barbarian spoil!

A servant brought in a tray of liquors and cigarettes; they sat in the midst of pictures and stuffs, and sipped and smoked.

"Now," Mrs. Phillips announced briskly, "I want to hear all about you!"

"It's only the old story, — more jobs and more strikes, — the chase for the nimble dollar," he answered lightly. "You have to run faster for it all the time."

"But you are making money?" she questioned directly.

"I'm spending it."

He found it not difficult to tell her the state of his case. She nodded comprehendingly, while he let her see that his situation, after two years of hard work, was not altogether as prosperous as it appeared on the surface. Payments on buildings under construction were delayed on account of the strikes; office expenses crept upward; and personal expenses mounted too. And there was that constant pressure in business — the fear of a cessation in orders.

"We may have to move back to town after all. That Loring place is pretty large to swing, and in town you can be poor in obscurity."

"Nonsense! You must not go back. People will know then that you haven't money. You are going to get bigger things to do when the strikes are over. And you are so young. My! not thirty-five."

Her sharp eyes examined the man frankly, sympathetically, approving him swiftly. His clay was like hers; he would succeed, she judged — in the end.

"Come! I have an idea. Why shouldn't you build here, on my land? Something pretty and artistic; it would help you, of course, to have your own house. I know the very spot, just the other side of the ravine — in the hickories. Do you remember it?"

In her enthusiasm she proposed to go at once to examine the site. Pinning a big hat on her head, she gathered up her long skirt, and they set forth, following a neat wood-path that led from the north terrace into the ravine, across a little brook, and up the other bank.

"Now, here!" She pointed to a patch of hazel bushes. "See the lake over there. And my house is almost hidden. You would be quite by yourselves."

He hinted that to build even on this charming spot a certain amount of capital would be needed. She frowned and settled herself on the stump of a tree.

"Why don't you try that Harris man? You know him. He made a heap of money for me once, — corn, I think. He knew just what was going to happen. He's awfully smart, and he's goue in with Rainbow, you know. I am sure he could make some money for you."

"Or lose it?"

She laughed scornfully at the idea of losing.

"Of course you have got to risk something. I wouldn't give a penny for a man who wouldn't trust his luck. You take my advice and see Harris. Tell him I sent you."

She laughed again, with the conviction of a successful gambler; it became her to laugh, for it softened the lines of her mouth.

She was now forty-one years old, and she appeared to Jackson to be younger than when he had first gone to see her after his uncle's death. She had come back from Europe thinner than she had been for several years. Her hair was perfectly black, still undulled by age, and her features had not begun to sharpen noticeably. She had another ten years of active, selfish woman's life before her, and she knew it. Meantime he had grown older rapidly, so that they were much nearer together. She treated him quite as her equal in experience, and that flattered him.

"Yes," she continued, in love with her project, "there isn't a nicer spot all along the shore. And you would be next door, so to say. You could pay for the land when you got ready, of course."

She gave him her arm to help her in descending the steep bank of the ravine, and she leaned heavily on him. Beneath the bluff the lake lapped at the sandy shore in a summer drowse, and the June sun lay warmly about the big house as they returned to it. The shrubbery had grown rankly around the terrace, doing its best in its summer verdancy to soften the naked walls. The architect looked at the house he had built with renewed pride. It was pretentious and ambitious, mixed in motive like this woman, like himself. He would have fitted into the place like a glove, if his uncle had done the right thing. Somewhat the same thought was in the widow's mind.

"It was a shame that old Powers treated you so shabbily! They haven't done anything yet about that school, have they?"

"No; I thought I should be drawing the plans before this. Rather counted on it."

They stood for a moment on the terrace, looking at the house. Yes, it was like them both! They loved equally the comforts and the luxuries and the powers of this our little life. And they were bold to snatch what they wanted from the general feast.

"You must make Harris do something for you," she mused. "You can't bury yourself in a stuffy flat." Then in a few moments she added: "How's that hand-

some wife of yours ? I hear she's going to have another child." She continued with maternal, or, perhaps, Parisian, directness: "Two babies, and not on your feet yet! You mustn't have any more. These days children are no unmixed blessing, I can tell you. . . . Venetia? I left her in the East with some friends she made over there. She's too much for me already. She needs a husband who can use the curb." . . .

When Jackson reported to his wife the widow's offer, Helen said very quickly, "I had rather go back to the city to live, Francis, than do that."

"Why?" he asked with some irritation.

"Because, because—"

She put her arms about his neck in her desire to make him feel what she could not say. But he was thinking of Mrs. Phillips's advice to see the broker, and merely kissed her in reply to her caress. The widow had spoken wisely; it would be foolish to retreat now, to hide himself in the city. Instead, he would venture on with the others. It was the year of the great bull market, when it seemed as if wealth hung low on every bough, and all that a bold man had to do to win a fortune was to pick his stock and make his stake.

Forest Park was very gay that summer. There were perpetual dinners and house parties and much polo at the Shoreham Club. The architect, who was very popular, went about more than ever, sometimes with his wife, and often alone, as her health did not permit

much effort. Occasionally he played polo, taking the place of one of the regular team, and usually when there was a match he stopped at the club on his way from the city.

One of these polo Wednesdays, late in August, Helen strolled along the shore-path in the direction of the Phillipses' place, with an idea of calling on Venetia Phillips, if her strength held out. The path followed the curves of the bluff in full view of the lake, from which rose a pleasant coolness like a strong odor. Back from the edge of the bluff, in the quiet of well-spaced trees, stood the houses. They seemed deserted on this midsummer afternoon, for those people who had the energy to stir had gone to the polo grounds. The Phillips house, also, was apparently asleep in the windless heat, as Helen crossed the lawn that stretched from the edge of the bluff to the terrace; but when she reached the stone steps she caught a glimpse of Mrs. Phillips seated in the farther corner of the terrace, where luxuriant vines curtained a sheltered nook. Beyond was the outline of a man's form, and little rings of blue cigar smoke curled upward. The widow was leaning forward, her elbows resting comfortably on her knees, and in the animation of her talk she had put one hand on her companion's arm to emphasize her words. It lay there, while she looked into the man's face with her eager, flashing eyes.

Before Helen could take another step Mrs. Phillips turned her head, as if disturbed unconsciously by the presence of an intruder.

"Oh, is that you, Mrs. Hart?" the older woman asked

after a moment of scrutiny. "Did you walk in all this heat? Come over here."

"Helen!" Jackson exclaimed, rising, a trace of annoyance in his tone, as though he had been interrupted in some important business matter.

"Don't get up, Mrs. Phillips," Helen said quickly, and the coldness of her voice surprised her. "I am looking for Venetia."

And without further words she opened the terrace door and stepped into the hall.

"You'll find her about somewhere. Ask John!" Mrs. Phillips called after her coolly.

While the servant departed in search of Venetia, Helen moved restlessly about the long drawing-room, which oppressed her with its close array of dominating furniture, thinking of the two outside upon the terrace. She had no suspicion of wrong between them, or, indeed, any jealousy of this woman, who she well knew liked men — all men. Yet an unfamiliar pain gripped her heart. Slowly, for many months, she had felt some mysterious and hostile force entering her field, and now she seemed to see it pictured, dramatized here before her in this little scene, — a man and a woman with chairs pulled close together, their faces aglow with eager thoughts. The other part of her husband, that grosser side of him which she dimly felt and put forth from her mind with dread, was on intimate terms with this woman, who fed his ambitions. And the wife, suddenly, instinctively, hated her for it.

There was nothing evil, however, between those two on the terrace. The architect had come from town by an

early train to see the polo, and there Mrs. Phillips had found him, and had brought him home in her automobile. She had just learned a piece of news that concerned the architect closely, and they were discussing it in the shade and quiet of the north terrace.

"I know they're going to start soon. The judge let it out at dinner last night. He's no friend of yours, of course, because I like you. But he won't take the trouble to fight you. You must get hold of your cousin and the other trustees."

It was here that Mrs. Phillips, in her eagerness for his success, laid her hand on the young man's arm. Jackson murmured his thanks, thinking less of the widow than of the trustees of the Powers Jackson bequest.

"It'll be the biggest thing of its kind we have had in this city for years. It's only right that you should have it, too. Can't your wife win over the judge? He's always talking about her," she resumed after Helen's departure.

It was not strange that in the end the man should take the woman's hand, and hold it while he expressed his gratitude for all her good offices to him. It was a pleasant hand to hold, and the woman was an agreeable woman to have in one's confidence. Naturally, he could not know that she considered all men base, — emotionally treacherous and false-hearted, and would take her amusement wherever she could get it.

Venetia found Helen in the drawing-room, very white, her lips trembling, and beads of perspiration on her forehead.

"What's the matter?" Venetia demanded quickly. "Have you seen a ghost anywhere?"

"It's nothing," the older woman protested. "I shouldn't have walked so far. And now I must go back at once, — yes, really I must. I'm so sorry."

"Let me call Mr. Hart," Venetia said, troubled by the woman's white face. "I saw him come in with mamma a little while ago."

"No, no, I prefer not, please. It would worry him."

Then Venetia insisted on driving her home, and left her calmer, more herself, but still cold. She kissed her, with a girl's demonstrativeness, and the older woman burst into tears.

"I am so weak and so silly. I see things queerly," she explained, endeavoring to smile.

After the girl had gone, Helen tried to recover her ordinary calm. She played with the little Francis, who was beginning to venture about the walls and chairs of his nursery, testing the power in his sturdy legs. This naïve manifestation of his masculine quality touched the mother strangely. She saw in this mark of manhood the future of the boy. What other of man's instincts would he have? Would he, too, hunger and fight for his share in the spoil of the world?

The terrible hour of her woman's agony was fast approaching, when she should put forth another being into the struggle with its mates. She did not shrink from the pain before her, although she began to wonder if it might not end her own life, having that dark foreboding common to sensitive women at this crisis. If

death came now, what had she done with her life? She would leave it like a meal scarce tasted, a task merely played with — something seen but not comprehended. What had she done for the man she loved? This afternoon when she saw her husband, so remote from her, travelling another road, a bitter sense of the fruitlessness of all living had entered her heart. This husband whom she had so passionately loved!

An hour later, as the architect was taking his leave of Mrs. Phillips, a servant brought him a telephone message from his house. His wife was suddenly taken ill. He raced home through the leafy avenues in the big touring car, which fortunately stood ready before the door. He found Helen white and exhausted, her eyes searching the vacant horizon of her bedroom.

"Why, Nell! Poor girl!" he exclaimed, leaning over her, trying to kiss her. "The walk was too much for you in all this heat. Why didn't you let me know?"

Her lips were cold and scarcely closed to his caress. She pushed him gently from her, wishing to be alone in her trial. But shortly afterward, purging her heart of any suspicion or jealousy, — still haunted by that fear of death, — she drew him to her and whispered: —

"You were talking with Mrs. Phillips. I didn't want to — it's all right, Francis. I love you, dear! Oh! I love you!"

CHAPTER XIV

Rumor had it that the Powers Jackson trust was about to be fulfilled. It had become known among the friends of the trustees that during these prosperous times the fund for the educational project had grown apace, and was now estimated to be from five to six millions of dollars. It was understood that some of the trustees were in favor of handing over this munificent bequest to a large local university, with the stipulation that a part of the money should be devoted to maintaining a school on the West Side where some form of manual training or technology should be taught.

One morning, not long after Helen's confinement, Jackson read aloud from the newspaper an item to the effect that negotiations were under way with the university.

"So that's their game!" he exclaimed to Helen gloomily, seeing in this move an unexpected check to his ambition.

"How can they even think of it!" she responded warmly, unwontedly stirred at the thought that the old man's design had already become thus blurred in the minds of his nearest friends. "That wasn't in the least what uncle meant should be done. I wish I could see

Everett, or Judge Phillips, and find out the truth in all this talk."

"Yes," Jackson assented. "I should like to know what they mean to do."

Then he went to the train, trying to recall the names of the influential trustees of the university, and wondering whether after all there would be any monumental building erected with his uncle's money. Fate seemed disposed to keep from his touch the smallest morsel of the coveted millions!

It was not long before Helen had the opportunity she desired of finding out from the trustees what was the truth beneath the newspaper gossip. Judge Phillips with Mr. Pemberton took the seat behind her in the car of the Chicago train one morning, and the judge leaning forward inquired about the children. Before he settled back into his newspaper, Helen ventured to mention the current report about the Powers Jackson bequest.

"I hope it isn't true," she protested warmly. "Mr. Jackson was not interested in universities, I know, — at least especially. He didn't believe very much in theoretical education; I don't think he would have wanted his money used that way."

"What is that?" Pemberton asked with interest.

The judge, who preferred to talk babies or shrubs with a pleasant young woman, answered briefly: —

"Well, we haven't settled anything yet. Mr. Hollister seems to be against the university plan, and I don't know that I favor it. But you'll have to talk to Pemberton here. It was his idea."

"Why do you think Mr. Jackson would have objected?" Pemberton inquired gravely.

"We often used to discuss college education," Helen replied quickly, turning to the younger trustee. "And he had very positive ideas about what was needed nowadays. He thought that colleges educated the leaders, the masters, and that there would always be enough left for that kind of institution. So many people are interested in colleges. But he wanted to do something with his money for the people."

"Yes, of course, it must be a free technical school," Pemberton replied literally, "and it must be out there on the West Side."

"But planned for the people, the working people," she insisted.

"Naturally. But we are all the 'people,' aren't we, Mrs. Hart? I haven't much sympathy with this talk nowadays about the 'people' as opposed to any other class."

"That's the unions," the judge nodded sagely. "We are all the 'people.' There is no class distinction in educational matters. We want to offer the best kind of education for the poor boy or the rich boy. What was Powers himself? His school must be a place to help boys such as he was, of course."

They were both completely at sea as to the donor's real intentions, Helen felt sure, and she was eager to have them see the matter as she saw it. Suddenly ideas came to her, things she wished to say, things that seemed to her very important to say. She remembered talks that

she had had with the old man, and certain remarks about college education which had dropped from him like sizzling metal.

"But a technological school like the one in Boston," — Pemberton had instanced this famous school as an example they should follow, — "that's a place to educate boys out of their class, to make them ambitious, to push them ahead of their mates into some higher class."

"Well?" asked Pemberton. "What's the matter with that idea? Doesn't all education do just that for those who are fitted for it?"

"Uncle wanted something so different! He wanted to make boys good workmen, to give them something to be contented with when they had just labor before them, daily labor, in the factories and mills."

The judge's face puckered in puzzle over this speech. He was of an older generation, and he could see life only in the light of competition. Free competition in all the avenues of life — that was his ideal. And the constant labor disputes in Chicago had thickened his prejudices against the working people as a class. He believed, in common with his associates, that their one aim was to get somebody's money without working for it.

But the other man, who was younger and less prejudiced, was more responsive. He felt that this woman had an idea, that she knew perhaps what the benefactor really wanted, and so they talked of the school until the train reached Chicago. As they rose to leave the cars, Pemberton said warmly: —

"I am glad we have had this talk, Mrs. Hart. I think

I see what you mean, although I am not at all clear how to attain the objects that you describe as the donor's intention. But you have modified my ideas very materially. May I call on you some day and continue this discussion?"

"If you would!" Helen exclaimed, glowing with an enthusiasm unfelt for a long time.

"Well," the judge concluded, "I hope we can get the thing settled pretty soon and start on the building. I want to see something done before I die."

"Yes," Helen assented, "I should think you would want to see the school go up. And I hope Jackson will have the building of it."

She expressed this wish very simply, without considering how it might strike the trustees. It was merely a bit of sentiment with her that her husband, who had got his education from Powers Jackson, might, as a pure labor of love, in gratitude, build this monument to the old man. It did not then enter her mind that there would be a very large profit in the undertaking. She assumed that the architect would do the work without pay!

It was not until Pemberton's thin lips closed coldly and the judge stared at her in surprise that she realized what she had said. Then her face turned crimson with the thought of her indelicacy, as Judge Phillips replied shortly: —

"We haven't got that far yet, Mrs. Hart. It's probable that if we build we shall have a competition of designs."

The two men raised their hats and disappeared into

the black flood pouring across the bridge, while she got into an omnibus. That remark of hers, she felt, might have undone all the good of the talk they had had about the old man's plan. Her cheeks burned again as she thought of hinting for business favors to her husband. It seemed a mean, personal seeking, when she had been thinking solely of something noble and pure.

This idea distressed her more and more until she was ingulfed in that mammoth caravansary where one-half of Chicago shops and, incidentally, meets its acquaintances and gossips. She hurried hither and thither about this place in the nervous perturbation of buying. Finally, she had to mount to the third floor to have a correction made in her account. There, in the centre of the building, nearly an acre of floor space was railed off for the office force, — the bookkeepers and tally clerks and cashiers. Near the main aisle thirty or forty girls were engaged in stamping little yellow slips. Each had a computation machine before her and a pile of slips. Now and then some girl would glance up listlessly from her work, let her eyes wander vacantly over the vast floor, and perhaps settle her gaze for a moment on the face of the lady who was waiting before the cashier's window. This store boasted of the excellent character of its employees. They were of a neater, more intelligent, more American class than those employed in other large retail stores. Even here, however, they had the characteristic marks of dull, wholesale labor.

Helen was hypnotized by the constant punch, click, and clatter of the computation machines, the repeated

movements of the girls' arms as they stretched out for fresh slips, inserted them in the machines, laid them aside. This was the labor of the great industrial world, — constant, rhythmic as a machine is rhythmic, deadening to soul and body. Standing there beside the railing, she could hear the vast clatter of our complex life, which is carried on by just such automata as these girls. What was the best education to offer them, and their brothers and fathers and lovers? What would give their lives a little more sanity, more joy and human interest? — that was the one great question of education. Not what would make them and their fellows into department managers or proprietors.

The receipted bill came presently, with a polite bow. She stuffed the change into her purse and hurried away, conscious that the girl nearest the railing was looking languidly at the back of her gown.

On her way to the Auditorium to meet some women who were to lunch with her there, and afterward go to the afternoon concert, she stopped at her husband's office. The architect had moved lately to the top story of a large new building on Michigan Avenue, where his office had expanded. He had taken a partner, a pleasant, smooth-faced young man, Fred Stewart, who had excellent connections in the city, which were expected to bring business to the firm. Cook was still the head draughtsman, but there were three men and a stenographer under him now. His faith in Hart had been justified, and yet at times he shook his head doubtfully over some of the work which passed through the office.

Cook recognized Helen when she entered the outer office, and opened the little wicket gate for her to step inside.

"Your husband's busy just now, been shut up with a contractor most all the morning. Something big is on probably. Shall I call him?"

"No," she answered. "I'll wait awhile. Is this the new work?" She pointed in surprise to the water-color sketches and photographs on the walls. "It's so long since I have been in the office. I had no idea you had done so much."

"More'n that, too. There's some we don't hang out here," the draughtsman answered with suppressed sarcasm. "We've kept pretty busy."

He liked his boss's wife. She had a perfectly simple, kindly manner with all the world, and a face that men love. The year before she had had Cook and his younger brother in the country over Sunday, and treated them "like distinguished strangers," as Cook expressed it.

"That's the Bushfields' house — you know it, perhaps? This is Arnold Starr's residence at Marathon Point — colonial style. That's an Odd Fellows hall in Peoria. I did that myself."

Helen said something pleasant about the blunt elevation of the Odd Fellows hall.

"That's the Graveland," he continued, pointing to a dingy photograph that Helen recognized. "It was called after the contractor's name. We did that the first year."

"Yes, I think I remember it," she murmured, passing on quickly. That was the building her husband had

done for the disreputable contractor, who had made it a mere lath-and-plaster shell.

She kept on around the room, glancing at the photographs and sketches. Among the newer ones there were several rows of semi-detached houses that, in spite of the architect's efforts, looked very much as if they had been carved out of the same piece of cake. Some of these were so brazen in their commonplaceness that she thought they must be the work of the Cooks. Probably Jackson had reached that point of professional success where he merely "criticised" a good many of the less important sketches, leaving the men in the office to work them out.

She sat down to wait, her interest in the office sketches easily dulled. They were much like the products of the great emporium that she had just left, — of all marketable kinds to suit all demands. The architect worked in all the "styles," — Gothic, early English, French château, etc. There was little that was sincere, honest, done because the man could do it that way and no other. It was all clever contrivance.

Men came and went in the offices, the little doors fanning back and forth in an excitement of their own. The place hummed with business; messengers and clerks came in from the elevators; contractors exchanged words with the busy Cook; and through all sounded the incessant call of the telephone, the bang of the typewriter. A hive of industry! It would have pleased the energetic soul of the manager of Steele's emporium.

Meantime the wife was thinking, "What does it mean to *him?*" When they began their married life in

a flat on the North Side, Jackson had brought his sketches home; and she had kept for his use a little closet-like room off the hall where he worked evenings. But from the time they had moved into the Loring house he had rarely brought home his work; he was too tired at night and felt the need for distraction when he left the office. Had he lost his interest in the art side of his profession? Was he turning it into a money-making business, like Steele's? She reproached herself as the mere spender and enjoyer, with the children, of the money, which came out of these ephemeral and careless buildings, whose pictures dotted the walls.

She was roused by the sound of her husband's voice. He was coming through the inner door, and he spoke loudly, cheerily, to his companion.

"Well, then, it's settled. Shall I have Nelson draw the papers?" A thick, cautious voice replied in words that were unintelligible, which caused the architect to laugh. Then they emerged into the outer office. The stranger's square, heavy face, his grizzled beard, and thick eyebrows were not unknown to Helen.

"So long, Hart," the contractor murmured, as he disappeared into the hall.

"Why, Helen! You here!" the architect exclaimed when he caught sight of his wife. "Why didn't you let me know? Always tell Miss Fair to call me."

He took her hand, and putting his other hand under her chin he gave her a little caress, like a busy, indulgent husband.

"Who was that man, Francis?" she asked.

"The one who came out with me? That was a contractor, a fellow named Graves."

She had it on her lips to say, "And you promised me once that you would never have any more business with him." But she was wise, and said simply, "I came away this morning without enough money, and I have those women at luncheon, you know."

"Of course. Here! I'll get it for you in a minute." He rang a bell, and pulling out a little check-book from a mass of papers, letters, memoranda, that he carried in his pocket, wrote a check quickly with a fountain pen as he stood.

"There, Miss Fair!" He handed the check to the waiting stenographer. "Get that cashed at the bank downstairs and give the money to Mrs. Hart."

When the young woman, with an impersonal glance at the husband and wife, had disappeared, the architect turned to Helen and pulled out his watch.

"I may have to go to St. Louis to-night. If you don't see me on the five two, you'll know I have gone. I'll be back to-morrow night, anyway. That's when we dine with the Crawfords, isn't it?"

His mind gave her only a superficial attention, and yet he seemed happy in spite of the pressure of his affairs. The intoxication of mere activity, the excitement of "doing," so potent in our country, had got its grip on him. In his brown eyes there burned a fire of restless thoughts, schemes, combinations, which he was testing in his brain all his waking moments. Yet he chatted courteously while they waited for the stenographer to return.

"By the way," he remarked, "I telephoned Everett this morning, and he says there's nothing in that story about their giving the university the money. He says Hollister knows uncle wouldn't have wanted it, and Hollister is dead set against it."

"Judge Phillips and Mr. Pemberton were on the train with me this morning, and they talked about it. They don't seem altogether clear what the trustees will do with the money. I hope they won't do that. It would be too bad."

"I should say so," Jackson assented warmly.

He accompanied his wife downstairs and bought her some violets from the florist in the vestibule. They parted at the street corner, for he was already late in meeting an appointment. She watched him until he was swallowed up by the swift-flowing stream on the walk, her heart a little sad. He was admirable toward her in every way. And yet — and yet — she hated the bustle of the city that had caught up her husband and set him turning in its titanic, heartless embrace. There rose before her the memory of those precious days on the sea when they had begun to love, and in some inexplicable manner it seemed to her that after these years of closest intimacy they were essentially farther apart than then.

Being a sensible woman, however, she dismissed her transient disagreement with life and presented to her guests a smiling, cordial face.

Mrs. Horace Bushfield was already waiting for her in the foyer of the hotel, where a number of suburban

luncheon parties were assembling. Presently the others came: Mrs. Rainbow, who was still toiling to better heights of social prestige and regarded her acceptance of this invitation as a concession to the fine arts; Mrs. Ollie Buchanan, a young married woman, who was already a power on the St. Isidore hospital board; the younger Mrs. Crawford and a guest of hers from out of town; and Mrs. Freddie Stewart, the wife of Jackson's partner,— six in all. They were soon seated about a table, eating their oysters and spying over the large dining-room for familiar faces.

"There's Betty Stuart over there," Mrs. Rainbow remarked, proud of the ease with which she handled the nickname. "My, how ill she looks! You know she had typhoid pneumonia in New York. She looks as if she were going to walk into her grave."

"Perhaps it wasn't just typhoid," Mrs. Bushfield added; "they tell strange stories. Her husband didn't go on once while she was ill."

"Couldn't get away, poor man!"

The two laughed, while Mrs. Buchanan looked at them coldly.

"Yes, this is the best restaurant we have," Mrs. Bushfield explained apologetically to the guest from out of town. "Chicago has miserable hotels. Wretched food, too. You can't help it, my dear,"—she turned good-humoredly to Helen, and then concluded with the comfortable superiority of abuse,—"but Chicago is still a village."

Men and women were moving noiselessly to and fro

over the thickly carpeted floor that seemed to give off an odor of stale food. The dull red walls were already streaked here and there by soot, and the coarse lace curtains at the windows had been washed to a dirty gray in fruitless effort to make them clean. Behind their folds on the window-ledges there had gathered a thick sediment of ashes and coal dust, and beneath this the white paint was smutched with soot. Nevertheless, the ladies accustomed to the unconquerable dirt of the city ate their luncheon undisturbed.

With the coming of the sweetbreads Mrs. Buchanan was saying confidentially to Mrs. Rainbow: —

"She's quite done for herself, you know. Mrs. Antony Crawford says that she will not have her again at her house. I should think that her mother would take her away. They say that Stanwood Phillips, too, has disgraced himself at Yale — awfully fast. But Venetia must be a perfect little fool. She might have had Stephen Lane."

"So might any girl who had money these ten years," Mrs. Freddie Stewart remarked positively.

"Beast of a temper, that man. I pity the girl he gets." . . .

"I must tell you, — they were at the Ritz last summer when we were, and positively they didn't know enough French to order their food. Their chauffeur used to take them about, and he would go anywhere he had a mind to, you know. Positively helpless. So we took pity on them, you know, and showed them things for a time."

On the other side of the table Mrs. Crawford's voice was raised in protest to Helen.

"You can't shop in this place. Steele's has got as bad as the rest. I go to New York for everything." . . .

"Isn't Sembrich getting too fat to sing?" . . .

"Who is that new tenor? I heard him in London last spring. He was fine." . . .

At last Helen ventured to say, "We should be starting, if we are to hear the Leonore overture."

"Oh! bother the overture. Let's stay here and talk until it's time for Sembrich. The rest of it is such a bore," Mrs. Rainbow protested, nursing covetously her ice.

Finally the company got under way and proceeded to the concert hall, much to Helen's relief. She had no complaint to make of her guests, who had been got together for Mrs. Stewart's pleasure. They were quite as intelligent women as she was, and all of them more important than she in the sphere where they lived. They were good wives, and two of them good mothers. Their talk, however, had seemed to her intolerably petty and egotistical, reflecting a barren life of suburban gossip and city sprees. Their husbands, working furiously here in the resounding city, maintained them in luxury for their relaxation and amusement, and provided they kept on the broad avenues of married life cared little how they spent their days. In Steele's great store, and in a thousand other stores and factories of the vast city, girls and women were mechanically pounding their machines hour after hour. The fine flower of all their dead labor in

life was the luxury of these women, who ate and dressed, loved, married, and had children in idleness and ease. . . .

The waiter came with the bill, — eighteen dollars and thirty cents, and two dollars to the waiter who stood eying the tray. Helen had been rather ashamed, too, of the simplicity of the food. She had not offered them wine, which she knew Mrs. Crawford was used to having at luncheon. Jackson would have laughed at her economy or been irritated by it. They often entertained friends in this same restaurant after the theatre, and she had seen the waiter carry off two twenty-dollar bills and return with very little change. It seemed to her plain nature simply wicked to pay so much money — the blood of human beings — merely to eat. They paid, she knew, for the tarnished ceilings, the heavy carpets, the service — all the infinite tawdry *luxe* of modern life.

"And why not?" Jackson demanded impatiently when she protested. "Don't I make it? If I want to spend it on champagne and crab-meat, why shouldn't I? I hustle hard enough to get it."

The argument was positive, but she felt that it was imperfect. Yet all their friends lived as they did, or even better: the bill for pleasure with them all was a large one. . . .

By the time they had reached Mrs. Phillips's box, which they were to occupy, the concert was well advanced. The massive chords of the Tschaikowsky's symphony broke through the low chatter of the boxes.

"One of those bangy Russian things," Mrs. Rainbow

whispered ruefully, as she tugged at her wrap in fat helplessness.

Helen helped her to disengage her lace and then arranged the chairs for her guests. While the women opened their opera-glasses and took a preliminary survey of the hall, she sank into the rear seat, pulled the chenille portière half over her face, and closed her eyes.

That "bangy Russian thing" whipped her blood and sent strange pictures flying through her head. For the moment it loosed the cords that seemed to bind her to a stake. The heat and smell and twaddling voices of the hotel dining-room faded away. And in its place the divine music filled her soul, transforming her from a weak and doubting woman, who floated helplessly in her petty world of comforts, into some more active, striving creature, — a maker and moulder of life!

CHAPTER XV

Jackson had lately bought a couple of hunters, and Sundays, when it was good weather, Helen and he often went over to the club stables to see the horses and the hounds. It was a pleasant spot of a fine summer morning. The close-cropped turf rolled gently westward from the brow of the hill on which the club-house stood to a large horizon of fields, where a few isolated trees, branching loftily, rose against a clear sky. The stables were hidden in a little hollow some distance from the house, and beyond them was a paddock where a yelping pack of hounds was kenelled. Close at hand some captive foxes crouched in their pen, listening sharp-eyed and fearful to the noisy chorus of their enemies.

No sports of any kind were allowed on Sundays, for the community was severely orthodox in regard to the observance of Sunday, as in other merely moral matters. But when the weather was good there were usually to be found about the stables a number of young men and women, preparing for tête-à-tête rides over the country roads or practising jumps at the stone wall beside the paddock. Later in the morning they would stroll back to the club veranda for a cool drink, and

gossip until the church-going members returned from service, and it was time to dress for luncheon.

Of the younger set Venetia Phillips was most often to be found down by the stone wall on a Sunday morning. She had come home from Europe this last time handsome, tall, and fearless, thirsty for excitement of all sorts, and had made much talk in the soberer circles of suburban society. She was a great lover of dogs and horses, and went about followed by a troop of lolloping dogs — an immense bull presented by an English admirer, and a wolf hound specially imported, being the leaders of the pack. She was one of the young women who still played golf now that it was no longer fashionable, and on hot days she might be seen on the links, her brown arms bare to the shoulders, and her blue black hair hanging down her back in a flood. She rode to all the hunts, not excepting the early morning meets late in the season. It was said, also, that she drank too much champagne at the hunt dinners, and occasionally allowed a degree of familiarity to her admirers that shocked public opinion in a respectable and censorious society which had found it hard to tolerate the mother.

Indeed, Mrs. Phillips could do nothing with her; she even confided her troubles to Helen. "My dear, the girl has had every chance over there abroad; — we had the very best introductions. She spoiled it all by her idiocy. Stanwood is making a fool of himself with a woman, too. Enjoy your children now, while you can spank them when they are naughty."

And Helen, although she had scant sympathy with the domestic tribulations of the rich, was puzzled by the girl. The friendship between them, which had begun so prosperously over Pete's sick-bed, had largely faded away. The winter after their visits to Dr. Coburn's laboratory Venetia had spent in a famous Eastern school, where Western girls of her class were sent to acquire that finish of manner which is still supposed to be the peculiar property of the older communities. On her return she was no longer the impulsive girl that stared wide-eyed at the eccentric doctor's opinions; there were reticencies in her which the married woman could not overcome. Since then their paths had crossed more rarely, and when they met there was a certain teasing bravado in Venetia's attitude which prevented intimacy.

Mrs. Buchanan's pungent gossip about the girl, and the widow's bitter complaint of her daughter, rose to Helen's mind one Sunday as they stood together at the stone wall by the club stables, watching Lane, who was trying a new hunter. Lane's temper was notoriously bad; the Kentucky horse was raw and nervous; he refused the jump, almost throwing his rider. Lane, too conscious of the spectators, his vanity touched, beat the horse savagely on the head.

"Low!" Venetia grumbled audibly, turning her back on the scene. "Come!" she said to Helen, seizing her arm. "Haven't you had enough of brutes for one morning? Come up to the club and have a talk. That's the man madam my mother would like to have me marry! Do you suppose he'd use the whip on his wife?"

"He has his good side, even if his temper is short," Helen objected, as they strolled across the links toward the club-house. "You might do worse, Venetia."

"Quite the picture of a young girl's fancy! Forty-eight, and he's asked every eligible girl in the city to marry him, and they have all shied. So do I, though I wasn't in the running over there in London—in spite of all the fuss the Chicago papers made about me, I wasn't —you know Mrs. Phillips runs a regular press bureau! But I am not quite down to him yet."

They had the club veranda to themselves at that mid-morning hour. Venetia flung herself into a chair and flicked the tips of her boots with her whip. The small Francis, who had followed his mother, tumbled on the grass with the terrier Pete. Now and then Pete, who was privileged on Sundays, would hobble to the veranda and look at his mistress.

"You wouldn't marry a man like that, now would you? Well? You want to say something disagreeable, don't you! You have had it on your conscience for weeks. I could see it in your eye the other afternoon when you were with Mrs. Freddie Stewart—that nice little cat. Come, spit it out, as the boys say."

"Yes, I have had something on my mind."

"You don't like me now that I have grown up?"

"I thought we should be so much better friends," Helen admitted frankly.

"I am not the nice little girl you used to know when the doctor entertained us and Pete with scientific con-

versation mixed with social philosophy — that's what troubles you?"

"Why — why are you so different?"

"You mean, why do I smoke? drink champagne? and let men kiss me?"

She laughed at the look of consternation on Helen's face.

"That's what you mean, isn't it? My sporting around generally, and drinking too much wine at that dinner last fall, and supplying these veranda tabbies with so much food for thought? Why can't I be the nice, sweet young woman you were before you were married? A comfort to Mrs. Phillips and an ornament to Forest Manor!"

"You needn't be all that, and yet strike a pleasanter note," the older woman laughed back.

"My dear gray mouse, I'm lots worse than that. Do you know where I was the other night when mamma was in such a temper because I hadn't come home, and telephoned all around to the neighbors?"

"At the Bascoms'?"

"Of course, all sweetly tucked up in bed. Not a bit of it! A lot of us had dinner and went to see a show — that was all on the square. But afterward Teddy Stearns and I did the Clark Street levee, at one in the morning, and quite by ourselves. We saw heaps and heaps — it was very informing — I could tell you such stories! And it went all right until Teddy, like a little fool, got into trouble at one of the places. Some one said something to me not quite refined, and Ted was just enough elated to be on his dignity. If we hadn't

had an awful piece of luck, there would have been a little paragraph in the papers the next morning. Wouldn't that have made a noise?"

"You little fool!" groaned Helen.

"Oh! I don't know," Venetia continued imperturbably. "Let me tell you about it. Just as I had hold of Ted and was trying to calm him down, somebody hit him, and there was a general scrap. Ted isn't so much of a fool when he is all sober. Just then a man grabbed me, and I found myself on the street. It was — Well, no matter just now who it was. Then the man went back for Ted, and after a time he got him, rather the worse for his experience. We had to send him to a hotel, and then my rescuer saw me home to the Bascoms'. My, what a talking he put up to me on the way to the North Side!"

She waited to see what effect she had produced, but as Helen said nothing she continued with a laugh: —

"I suppose you are thinking I am a regular little red devil. But you don't know what girls do. I've seen a lot of girls all over. And most of 'em, if they travel in a certain class, do just as fool things as that. On the quiet, you understand, and most of them don't get into trouble, either. They marry all right in the end, and become quiet little mammas like you, dear. Sometimes, when they are silly, or weak, or have bad luck, there's trouble. Now, I am not talking loose, as Ted would say. I've known Baltimore girls, and New York girls, and Philadelphia girls, and Boston girls, — and the Boston ones are the worst ever!

"Why should the women be so different from the men, anyway? They are the same flesh and blood as their fathers and brothers, and other girls' fathers and brothers, too. . . . Don't make that face at me! I'm nice enough, too, at least a little nice. Didn't you ever sit here evenings, or over at the Eversley Club, and watch the nice little girls? But perhaps you couldn't tell what it means when they do things and say things. You ought to get a few points from me or some other girl who is next them. We could tell you what they've been up to ever since they left school, day by day."

The small Francis was rolling over and over on the green turf, rejoicing in the freedom of soiling his white suit. Beyond the polo field a couple on horseback were passing slowly along the curving road into the woods. The cicadas sang their piercing August song among the shrubs. It was a drowsy, decorous scene.

"It isn't all like that," the older woman protested, looking out on the pleasant landscape. "You can choose what you will have."

"Do you think I should do any better if I chose *your* kind, my dear?" Venetia asked quietly. "Or my mother's? Is Maida Rainbow's conversation an improvement on Ted's? It isn't any more grammatical. And Mrs. Ollie Buchanan's talk is worse than mine. Come now, dear lady, tell me the truth! After several winters by the suburban fireside do you still find your heart beating warmly when hubbie plods up the street at eve in his new auto? Do you advise me to marry Mr. Stephen Lane and transfer my activities to Breathett

Lodge, — join the tabby chorus, just to keep the tabbies quiet? Is the married state of all these people you and I know out here to be so much desired?"

"Most of the men and women you know here in Chicago are not bad."

"Oh, no! They're good out here, most of 'em, and dull, damn dull. They're afraid to take off their gloves for fear it isn't the correct thing. A lot of 'em aren't used to good clothes, like that Mrs. Rainbow. As uncle says, 'Our best people are religious and moral.' But there's more going on than you dream of, gray mouse."

"You are too wise, Venetia."

"I'll tell you the reason why we sport. We're dull, and we are looking for some fun. The men get all the excitement they need scrambling for money. Girls want to be sports, too, and they can't do the money act. So they sport — otherwise. That's the why."

She rapped the floor with her whip, and laughed at Helen's perplexity.

"I want to be a real sport, and know what men are like, really, when they are off parade, as you nice women don't know 'em."

"Well, what are they like?"

"Some beasts, some cads, some good fellows," Venetia pronounced definitively. "Do you know why I let men kiss me sometimes? To see if they will, if that sort of thing is all they want of me. And most of 'em do want just that, married or single. When a man has the chance, why, he goes back to the ape mighty quick."

She nodded sagely when Helen laughed at her air of wisdom, and she continued undisturbed: —

"There are some of them now, coming up from the paddock. They have had their little Sunday stroll, and now they want a drink to make them feel cool and comfy, and some conversation with the ladies. We must trot out our prettiest smiles and smoothest talk while they sit tight and are amused."

"And so you think this is all, just these women and men you see here and in other places like this? And the millions and millions of others who are trying to live decent lives, who work and struggle?"

"I talk of those I know, dearie. What are the rest to me? Just dull, ordinary people you never meet except on the street or in the train. We are the top of it all. . . . I don't care for books and all that sort of thing, or for slumming and playing with the poor. If you knew them, too, I guess you'd find much the same little game going on down there."

"What a horrid world!"

"It is a bit empty," the girl yawned. "I suppose the only thing, after you have had your run, is to marry the decentest man you can find, who won't get drunk, or spend your money, or beat you, and have a lot of children. Yours are awfully nice! I'd like to have the kids without the husband — only that would make such a row!"

"That would please your mother, to have you married."

"Oh, mother! I suppose it would please her to have me marry Mr. Stephen Lane," Venetia answered coldly.

"One doesn't talk about one's mother, or I'd like to tell you a thing or two on that head. She needn't worry over me. She's had her fun, and is taking what she can get now."

The group of men and women drew near the clubhouse. Jackson stopped to speak to a man who had just driven up. Venetia pointed to him derisively.

"There! See Jackie, your good man? He's buzzing old Pemberton, that crusty pillar of society, because he's got a little game to play with him. He's after old Pemby's vote for that schoolhouse. You mustn't look so haughty, dear wife. It's your business, too, to be nice to dear Mr. Pemberton. I shall leave you when he comes up, so that you can beguile him with your sweet ways. It's money in thy husband's purse, mouse, and hence in thy children's mouths. Now if we women could scramble for the dollars, — why, we shouldn't want other kinds of mischief. I'd like to be a big broker, like Rainbow, and handle deals, and make the other fellows pay, pay, pay!"

She swung the small Francis over her head and tumbled him in the grass, to the delight of Pete, who hobbled about his mistress, yelping with joy.

There was something hard and final in the girl's summary of her experience. And yet in spite of the obvious injustice of her accusations, Helen felt startled and ashamed before her railing. After all, was there such an infinite distance between the decent lives of herself, her husband, and their friends and the heedless career of this undisciplined girl? Were they governed by finer ends than hers? Vigorous, hot-blooded,

and daring, Venetia would have battled among men as an equal, and got from the fight for existence health, and sanity, and joy. As it was, she was rich enough to be protected in the struggle for existence, and was tied down by the prejudices of her class. She was bottled passion!

The architect still held Pemberton in conversation on the drive, and Venetia presently returned to Helen, smiling slyly into her face.

"That doctor man was an amusing chap, wasn't he? I mean Dr. Coburn, the one who mended up Pete when I was a young miss, and outraged mamma by sending her a receipted bill for two hundred and fifty dollars. He asks about you still. Why did you drop him? I always thought that was a bit queer in you, you know. You liked him, but he wasn't your kind, and you dropped him."

"Where have you seen him?" Helen asked evasively.

"Oh, here and there. He writes me pretty often, too. Why not? He was the man who helped me out of that scrape with Teddy. Wouldn't Jackie let you have anything to do with him? Jack is an awful snob, you know."

"Francis didn't like him," Helen admitted a little sadly. "I am afraid I didn't make much of an effort either with him or with that poor Mr. Hussey. It's so hard to do some things, to know people you like when they're out of your path."

Venetia scrutinized the older woman's face and laughed.

"Just so! What did I tell you?"

"How is he?"

"Just as always, — poor, down at the heel and all over, an out-and-out crank."

"How do you meet him?" Helen asked pointedly.

"Sometimes at his hang-out, as he calls it. I've had supper there once or twice with Molly Bascom. You needn't be alarmed. We talk science, and he abuses doctors. He trundled off to Paris or Vienna with that queer machine of his, and got some encouragement over there. You should hear him talk about Europe! Now he's crazy over some new bugs he's found. He may not make good from Jack's point of view. But you see that doesn't prevent me from liking him. He has a great time thinking all by himself. He'd starve himself to death if he had to, to do what he's after. That's the real thing. I offered him money once to help him out."

"Venetia, not that!"

"Yes. I said, 'See here, my friend, I've more of this than I want,' which was a lie. But I was willing to sell a horse or two. 'Help yourself,' I said, and when I want it I'll ask you.' I put a cardcase I had with me on the table, stuffed of course. He took it up, took out what was in it, handed the money back, and dropped the case in a drawer. 'None of that,' he said. 'I don't take money from a woman.' I was glad afterward that he didn't take it, though I don't know why — he looked specially hard up. I suppose I might have done it a nicer way, but I thought he would understand and treat me like a little girl, as he always has. . . . Well, here comes Jack at last."

She gave the architect a hand, which he shook with mock impressiveness.

"How do, Jackie! I've been teaching your domestic angel a thing or two."

"I guess you can't corrupt her."

It was evident that she and Jackson understood each other very well.

CHAPTER XVI

Season shifted into season, and meanwhile an impalpable veil of difference was falling between the architect and his wife. The peaceful days of winter, early spring, and late autumn were precious to the woman — days when the silent processes of nature touched her senses softly, and she could live undisturbed by calls and dinners with their array of familiar faces. Then she heard the birds in the trees behind the house, and listened to the rustling of the tall poplars beneath her windows, and watched the vivid colors of the lake. This harmony of nature, this great enveloping organism of peace, she was beginning to feel, was all that life held for her, — nature and her children, whose wants she fulfilled. Yet ever in the background, not far away, there hung in the horizon that black cloud above the city, which could not wholly be shut out in any revery of country peace. For with it she and her children were linked by all the cords of modern life.

She had felt the sly reproach in Venetia's references to Dr. Coburn. The seedy doctor had drawn her strongly, and yet in the face of her husband's contemptuous indifference to him she had made but one or two feeble attempts to reach him. A few times, also,

she had visited the bookbinder's sickly wife, and after the birth of little Francis had revived the class in bookbinding. Jackson had fitted up a studio for the class out of an old teahouse on the bluff, where during mild weather they received their friends in æsthetic informality. But the class had soon dwindled, the young married women of whom it was composed flitting to other pursuits, and the taciturn bookbinder taking offence at a fancied slight suddenly ceased his visits. Some weeks later when Helen called at the Husseys' rooms to see the wife, she found that they had moved away, and having written Dr. Coburn for their address without success, she had made no further attempt to find them.

Thus ended her efforts to reach that world which lay outside her own circle. More and more, as her married life went on, she had succumbed to the *milieu* that her husband had chosen. As his struggle for success grew hotter, she, too, in her way, had been absorbed into it, and had become the domestic and social satellite which he needed in his relations with rich clients. And so Venetia's careless defence of herself pricked her. Was there, after all, anything more admirable in the decent life that she and her husband led with its little circle of selfish activities than in the crude outbreaks of Venetia Phillips which had caused so much perturbation in Forest Park? They were not vicious to be sure, — the people she lived with; they were merely dull and negative.

One of these brooding days shortly after the talk on the club veranda, Helen set forth to a neighbor's with a

bundle of books and some flowers for Mrs. Buchanan, who was giving a dinner that evening. She had reached the point in the winding road where a long bridge crossed a deep ravine on the level with the topmost branches of lofty trees. At the other end of the bridge a man was standing looking down into the green depths below. He was so much absorbed in the ravine that he did not hear the woman's steps as she drew near. When she passed behind him, he glanced up with a startled look in his black eyes, and grasping the bicycle by his side was moving off.

"Don't you remember me, Mr. Hussey?" Helen asked, holding out her hand. "How are you? I am so glad to see you again. Did you ride out all the way from the city? We don't see many bicycles these days."

She poured forth her little flood of amiable sentences, while the bookbinder stood quietly holding his wheel.

"Yes," he answered slowly, when she paused. "I rode out on my wheel. I wanted to see how the country looked."

He paused and then continued: "Yes, I've been out of the city considerable after my wife died. I went West, to Kansas City. But I came back. I'm used to this place. My woman died here, and the child, too."

"I tried to find you after the class broke up," Helen explained. "I wanted to get your wife to come out here and visit me."

"That was nice and kind of you," he answered dryly.

"I have an errand a little way from here. Won't you

go with me and then come back to the house?" she persisted, piqued by his tone.

"Thank you, I don't believe I will. It's time I was starting back to the city."

"You had better rest awhile first."

"I ain't particularly tired. You are very good. What do you want me to come for?" he asked abruptly, and then continued to speak as if he were talking to himself: "You and I ain't the same kind of folks. We are placed different on this earth, and there's no getting away from the fact. It's best for us both to keep where we belong."

"Nonsense!" she retorted.

"As I have looked about among folks," he went on calmly, "I've seen that's the best way, in the long run —for the rich and the poor to keep to themselves. That's why you didn't see nothing of me after the ladies got tired of binding books. Not that I've got anything against those better fortuned than me. It's just the way things are made to run. So long as the present order lasts, man is divided from man — and that's all there is to it. The only use the poor man has for the rich man is to get work from him and some pay for it. The only use the rich man has for the poor man is to get his work done. And they'd better do their business apart, as far apart as they can."

"My husband isn't rich. We have to struggle, too."

Hussey smiled sceptically.

"I had all I could do when the woman was living to keep a decent room or two, and find enough to eat.

There's some difference between us, ain't there? And I don't speak like you, and maybe I eat different at the table."

"That's all very important," Helen laughed.

"It's the little things that separate, not the big ones. You look around your own kind of folks and see if that's not so. It's just the silly scraps of ways that keep man from man."

"Well, it's too good a day to quarrel about that. At least, you and I can both enjoy those trees down there."

A victoria came toward them at a lively trot, making the wooden planking resound. The lady in the carriage leaned forward and bowed to Helen, and then cast a second, longer glance at her companion.

"She's wanting to know who that man is you're talking to," Hussey remarked ironically. "No, them trees and the country in general ain't the same to me and you. You folks squat right out here and buy up all the land you can lay your hands on, at least all that can be got at easily from the city. Perhaps, though, some day it will be different, and the beautiful parts of the country will be kept for all to have."

They began to cross the bridge, and Helen holding the man in talk wiled him as far as her own gate, with an unreasoning determination to make him come into her house.

"I suppose I ought to take that bundle there," Hussey observed as they walked, pointing to the parcel that Helen held in her hand.

"It's nothing."

"I notice that don't make any difference among your kind. Your men folks may let their women suffer in other ways, but they fetch and carry for you in public."

"Yes — that's so," Helen laughed.

"That bundle ain't nothing for you to carry. You wouldn't have started out with it if it had been. It's the same way about giving a woman a seat in a car. If she looks as if she needed it, why a humane man would give her his seat the same as he would to a tired man But most times the man needs it more."

"You wouldn't have wanted your wife to stand?"

"Well, she weren't never real well, not after the child came."

He spoke more gently, and added without any polite delicacy, "There must have been something wrong happened then, for she got up weak, and couldn't bear children no more."

"You miss her!"

"Yes, sometimes, when work's plenty, and I feel strong, and there's something for her to live for. Most times I think it's just as well she's gone. And the child, too," he added softly. "You see it ain't as it is with you, with a working-man and his wife. They don't have so much love and notions, maybe. That don't stand long after the first weeks. The man's got to work and the woman, too. If she's a pretty-looking girl when he marries her, sweet and fresh, them looks don't last long. It's like anything you use all the time. There's no chance to lay it by and let it freshen up. Now you and my wife were about of an age, I judge. But she looked to be the

mother of you, before she died. You are as pretty as you ever was or more so, and men would court you to-day if you were single. It wasn't so with my woman, and I did the best I could for her, too. Don't you suppose a working-man hates to see his wife grow old, through hard work and no chance to freshen up? He mayn't be as nice in his tastes as your sort, but he don't like to see his wife wear out."

Romantic love, so he seemed to hold, was one of the luxuries of the expensive classes. While he was talking they passed into the driveway and came to the house. Hussey finally got to the veranda, where he sat stiffly on the edge of a large steamer chair, holding his derby hat in his two hands. After a time he deposited the hat on the floor and gradually slipped into the comfortable depths of the chair and talked on more freely.

There was nothing new or wise in the bookbinder's talk. Yet certain things that he said, furtive, flame-like words of revolt which contained half truths, sank into Helen's receptive mind: "Man pays pretty high for his civilization, as he calls it, and what does he get for it? The police station and the fire department." "The Bible says that man must be born again. Yes — that's so! With a new kind of belly that knows when it's had enough." "The labor question always comes down to cutting the pie: because a man with one kind of a brain can think faster than his neighbor, ought he to get a bigger slice? Does he need it to make him think?"

There was a vein of character in the man himself, a passionate faith in a vision of society other than that

which holds to-day. His talk was not vindictive, or greedy, or envious, but he assumed calmly that the present state of society was wasteful and unjust, and that already, here and there, men and women were beginning to wake from the individualistic nightmare and were ready to try an altogether new manner of living together.

"I get tired," he said in answer to a platitude that Helen made, "hearing what some folks are kind enough to do for society — how necessary they are to make it run. Don't you believe it, not for one second! If we could take account of stock in some way, and find out just what mere brains are good for and how much they do in gettin' food and clothes and shelter, I guess we'd put brains lower down. And what's more, if the only way you can get the best work out of smart men is to let them hog it, then human nature must be a pretty poor sort of outfit, and we'd better all starve. But the best workmen I've known didn't work because they had to: it was in 'em from the beginning of time to work better than the others."

The boys came home presently from a children's party at a neighbor's. They were dressed very prettily in white, with large collars of absurd shape and size. They wore neat little leather yachting caps with the names of men-of-war gaudily embossed in gold cord about the rims.

"They're healthy-looking chaps," Hussey observed as each one politely gave him a hand. "That's what rich folks can do for their children, if they've got good blood in 'em to start with. You can buy them the proper

food and put them in cool, big rooms, and plant 'em out here in the country."

"Yes, I am on a committee of women that has charge of a country home," Helen answered idly.

"Charity?" He pronounced the word ironically. "Well, I must be starting. It will be dark before I get halfway to the city."

He rose and took a long look at the blue lake.

"This'll have to last me some time. It's been mighty pleasant sitting here on your piazza and jawing away about these big things, Mrs. Hart."

"You'd better come again, then."

"Well, maybe I'll be riding out this way sometime. But you remember what I said about mixing! You stick to your side of the fence, and I'll try to stick to mine."

"Suppose I'm not altogether content with my side?"

"I guess you'll have to grin and bear it. I don't reckon to spend much time pitying you. It looks to me rather pretty on your side."

As they were shaking hands, the chug of an automobile could be heard in the roadway.

"That must be my husband!" Helen exclaimed. "Won't you wait a minute and see him?"

The heavy, lumbering machine with its ugly fat wheels rolled up the driveway, and after a final heave and sigh came to a stand before the veranda. The driver leaped down and opened the little door in the rear for his master to descend. The architect was smoking a cigar and carried in his arms a heavy bag of papers and books.

"Hello, Nell!" he called cheerily, and then looked inquiringly at the man beside her.

"Francis, this is Mr. Hussey. You remember Mr. Hussey who gave us lessons in bookbinding?"

"How do you do?" The architect greeted Hussey with a pleasant nod. "Very glad to see you again."

He held out his free hand in the simple, cordial fashion that made him popular in his office and with the foremen on his buildings. He always made a point of being genial with working people. He got more out of them that way and often avoided friction. He usually carried about with him a handful of black and strong cigars, which he dealt out on the slightest occasion.

"Sit down again, won't you?" he remarked. "Have a cigar?"

He pulled out one of the proper variety from his inner pocket.

"I don't smoke," the bookbinder replied shortly.

He made no further remark, and the architect, also, found himself at the end of his cordiality. Helen realized that the two men had nothing whatsoever to talk about. Jackson could have discussed bindings in a dilettante fashion, meaning certain rich and costly specimens of the art that wealthy amateurs bought and locked up in cabinets, but he knew nothing about the ordinary trade.

"Mr. Hussey rode out from the city on a bicycle," Helen explained. "I met him on the bridge and induced him to come up here and rest for a little while."

"Yes, it's hot," Jackson answered. "Fearfully hot on

the train from Indianapolis this morning. I haven't been cool all day until Fred let out the machine coming over from the station."

Hussey looked at the lumbering automobile sighing to itself below the veranda, and then at the chauffeur, who was waiting for orders.

"Good day," he said abruptly. "It's some longer to the city on a wheel than in one of them affairs."

Helen walked down the steps with her guest in a vague desire to be cordial. He mounted his wheel, and bending his little body over the frame, pedalled swiftly out of the driveway. Helen watched him for a moment, feeling that he would not call again, as she hoped he might. He had merely wandered their way this bright summer day like a chance stranger from some vast outer world, — a world that perpetually teased her spirit.

"What is he, Nell? Socialist or anarchist?" Jackson called out good-humoredly, when his wife returned to the veranda.

It was one of his jokes that his wife dabbled in socialism.

"I wish he would have stayed to dinner."

"But we're going out."

"Yes, I know. But he wouldn't have stayed anyway."

Her husband looked at her inquiringly, yet he was not sufficiently interested in Mr. Hussey to frame a question. He poured himself a glass of water, drank it, and when he set the glass down, the bookbinder had been washed into complete oblivion.

"Come! It must be time to dress," he said briskly.

CHAPTER XVII

The Harts were to dine at the Elisha Stewarts' that evening, and the architect had considered this engagement of sufficient importance to bring him back to Chicago all the way from Indianapolis. Elisha Stewart had made his money many years ago, when he commanded a vessel on the lakes, by getting control of valuable ore properties. The Elisha Stewarts had lived in Shoreham for nearly a generation, and were much considered,—very good people, indeed. Their rambling, old-fashioned white house, with a square cupola projecting from the roof, was one of the village landmarks. The place was surrounded by a grove of firs set out by Elisha himself when he built the house.

It was a large dinner, and most of the guests, who were of the older set, were already assembled in the long drawing-room when Helen and Jackson arrived. The people in the room were all talking very earnestly about a common topic.

"It's the Crawfords," Mrs. Stewart murmured asthmatically into Helen's ear. "You know they find his affairs in such a frightful tangle. They say there won't be much left."

"Indeed!" Jackson exclaimed sympathetically.

"Anthony wasn't all right, not fit for business for

more than a year before he died," Colonel Raymond was saying to the group. "And he snarled things up pretty well by what I hear."

"That slide in copper last March must have squeezed him."

"Squeezed? I should say it did."

"It wasn't only copper."

"No, no, it wasn't only copper," assented several men.

Among the women, the more personal application of the fact was openly made.

"Poor old Anthony! It must have troubled him to know there wasn't one of his family who could look out for himself. Morris was a pleasant fellow, but after he got out of Harvard he never seemed to do much. It will come hard on Linda."

"What has the youngest boy been up to lately?"

"The same thing, I guess."

"I heard he'd been doing better since he went on the ranch."

"He couldn't get into much trouble out there."

"Isn't there anything left?"

"Oh, the widow will have a little. But the in-laws will have to hunt jobs. One is out in California, isn't he?"

The company did not seem able to get away from the topic. Even after they went out to dinner, it echoed to and fro around the table.

"I say it's a shame, a crime!" Mr. Buchanan pronounced with confident earnestness. "A man with that sort of family has no right to engage in speculative

enterprises without settling a proper sum on his family first. There's his eldest daughter married to an invalid, his youngest daughter engaged to be married to a parson, and neither of his sons showing any business ability."

"That's a fact, Oliver," Mr. Stewart nodded. "But you know Anthony always loved deep water."

"And now it's his family who have got to swim in it."

"He was a most generous man," Pemberton remarked in a milder tone. "I hardly know of a man who's done more first and last for this town, and no one ever had to ask twice for his help in any public enterprise."

"Seems to have looked after other people's affairs better'n his own. It's a pity now the boys weren't brought up to business."

"That isn't the way nowadays. He was always ready for a gamble, and she didn't want her sons in the business."

From time to time there were feeble efforts to move the talk out of the rut in which it had become fixed. But the minds of most of those about the table were fascinated by the spectacle of ruin so closely presented to them. The picture of a solid, worldly estate crumbling before their eyes stirred their deepest emotions. For the moment it crowded out that other great topic of the new strike in the building trades. Every one at the table held substantially the same views on both these matters, but the ruin of the Crawford fortune was more immediately dramatic than the evils of unionism.

"When are you fellows going to start that school, Pemberton?" some one asked at last.

"Not until these strikes let up, and there's no telling

when that will be. If these labor unions only keep on long enough, they will succeed in killing every sort of enterprise."

"Yes, they're ruining business."

Then Pemberton, who was seated next to Helen, remarked to her: —

"You will be glad to know, Mrs. Hart, that the trustees have decided not to hand the work over to any institution, at least for the present."

"I am so glad of that," she replied.

"That's about as far as we have got."

Sensitively alive to her former blunder in expressing her wish that her husband might draw the plans for the school, she took this as a hint, and dropped the subject altogether, although she had a dozen questions on the tip of her tongue.

She noticed that Jackson, who was seated between Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Phillips, was drinking a good deal of champagne. She thought that he was finding the dinner as intolerably dull as she found it, for he rarely drank champagne. When the women gathered in the drawing-room for coffee, the topic of the Crawfords' disaster had reached the anecdotal stage.

"Poor Linda! Do you remember how she hated Chicago? She's been living at Cannes this season, hasn't she? I suppose she'll come straight home now. Does she own that place in the Berkshires?"

"No, everything was in his name."

"He was one of the kind who would keep everything in his own hands."

"Even that ranch doesn't belong to Ted, I hear."

"My, what a tragedy it is!"

There seemed to be no end to the talk about the lost money. Helen sat limply in her chair. The leaden dulness of the dinner-talk, the dead propriety and conventionality of the service, the dishes, the guests, had never before so whelmed her spirit as they did to-night. These good people were stung into unusual animation because a man had died leaving his family not poor, but within sight of poverty. For poverty is the deadliest spectre to haunt the merchant class at their lying down and at their uprising.

When the men came in, murmuring among themselves fragments of the same topic, Helen felt as though she might shriek out or laugh hysterically, and as soon as she could she clutched her husband, just as he was sitting down beside Mrs. Pemberton.

"Take me away, Francis. It's awful," she whispered.

"What's the matter?" he asked in quick concern. "Don't you feel well?"

"Yes, yes, I am all right. No, I am tired. My head aches. Can't we leave? I shall do something silly — come!"

As they got into their carriage, he demanded, "What was the matter?"

"Nothing, — just the awful dulness of it, — such people, — such talk, talk, talk about poor Mr. Crawford's money!"

"I thought the crowd was all right," he grumbled. "The best out here — what was the matter? Your nerves must be wrong."

"Yes, my nerves are wrong," she assented.

Then they were silent, and from the heat, fatigue, and champagne he relapsed into a doze on the way home. But when they reached the house he woke up briskly enough and began to talk of the dinner again: —

"Nell, Mrs. Phillips was speaking to me to-night about Venetia. She's worried to death over the girl. The men say pretty rough things about her, you know. Little fool! She'd better marry Lane if he wants her still, and keep quiet."

"Like mother, like daughter," Helen replied dryly. "And of the two I prefer the daughter."

"What makes you say that? Louise is all right; just likes to have her hand squeezed now and then."

"Phew!" Helen exclaimed impatiently.

There was something so short and hard in his wife's voice that Jackson looked at her in surprise. They went to their dressing-room; now that he had got his eyes open once more he made no haste to go to bed. There was something he wanted to say to his wife which needed delicate phrasing. He lit a cigarette and leaned back against the open window, through which the night air was drawing gently. After a little time he remarked: —

"The judge was talking some about the school. They are getting ready to build as soon as the strikes are settled. Has Everett said anything to you about it?"

"Not lately. I haven't seen him since we were at the Buchanans'. Why?"

"Why! I am counting on Everett, and the last time I saw him he seemed to me to be side-stepping. I've

seen Pemberton once or twice, but he always avoids the subject. I asked him point-blank to-night what their plans were, and he said the papers had everything that had been settled. He's a stiff one! I saw you were talking to him. Did he say anything about the school?"

Helen, who had been moving about the room here and there, preparing to undress, suddenly stood quite still. The memory of her remark to Pemberton that morning on the train swept over her again, coloring her cheeks. She answered the question after a moment of hesitation: —

"Yes, he spoke about their not giving the money to the university, but that was all. And I didn't like to ask questions."

"Oh!" Jackson murmured in a disappointed tone. "You might have drawn him out. He's likely to have a good deal to say about what is done. The judge is down on me, never liked me since I built for Louise — thinks I stuck her, I suppose. Wasn't his money, though. Hollister is on the fence; he'll do what Everett tells him. It rests with Pemberton, mostly."

Helen turned toward where he was standing and asked swiftly, "Why do you want them to give it to you so much?"

"Why?" The architect opened his mouth in astonishment. "Don't you know the size of the thing? They're going to spend a million or more on the school, put up one large building or several smaller ones. It's a chance that doesn't come every week to do a great public building."

She had begun to unhook her dress, and her nervous

fingers tangled the lace about the hooks. Jackson, seeing her predicament, put down his cigarette and stepped forward to help her. But she swerved away from him unconsciously, tugging at the lace until it broke loose from the hook.

"Francis!" she exclaimed, with a kind of solemnity. "You would not do it for money, just like any ordinary building?"

"And why not?" he asked, puzzled. "Am I drawing plans for fun these days? I'll tell you what, Nell, I need the money, and I need it badly. Something must turn up, and right away. Since the strikes began there hasn't been much new business coming into the office, of course, and it costs us a lot to live as we do. That's plain enough."

"We can live differently. I've often thought it would be better if we did, too."

"But I don't want to live differently. That's nonsense!"

They were silent for a little while before their unfinished thoughts. He broke the silence first:—

"Perhaps I ought to tell you that I've been caught in an—investment, some stocks I bought. A friend of mine advised me, a broker who is in with Rainbow. But the thing went wrong. I don't believe those fellows know as much as the man outside. Well, instead of making a good thing by it, I must find ten or twelve thousand dollars, and find it mighty quick. Now if I get this commission, I can borrow the money all right. I know who will let me have it. And then by the end

of the year it will straighten out. And the next time I go to buy stocks, well —"

"But that building — the school?" Helen interrupted. She pulled a thin dressing-sack over her shoulders and sat down on the edge of the bed, looking breathlessly into his face. What he had said about his losses in the stock market had made no impression on her. "That work is uncle Powers's gift, his legacy to the people. You can't do it just to make money out of it!"

"Why not?" he demanded shortly, and then added, with a dry little laugh: "I should say that building rather than any other. I'd like to pick up a few crumbs from the old man's cake. It's only common justice, seeing he did me out of all the rest."

She stared at him with bewildered eyes. Perhaps she was not a very quick woman, if after five years of daily contact with her husband she did not know his nature. But the conceptions she had cherished of him were too deep to be effaced at once. She could not even yet understand what he meant.

"'Did you out of all the rest'?" she queried in a low voice.

"Yes!" he exclaimed hardily. "And I think the trustees should take it into consideration that I didn't contest the will when I had the best kind of case and could have given them no end of trouble. I was a fool to knuckle under so quickly. I might at least have had an agreement with them about this matter."

"So," she said, "you want to build the school to make up what you think uncle should have given you?"

"You needn't put it just like that. But I need every cent I can make. The bigger the building, the better for me. And I can do it as well for them as anybody. They're probably thinking of having a competition, and asking in a lot of fellows from New York and Boston. They ought to keep it in this city, anyway, and then the only man I'd hate to run up against would be Wright. He's got some mighty clever new men in his office."

He talked on as he stripped off his coat and waistcoat and hung them neatly on the clothes-tree, permitting her to see all the consideration he had given to his chances for securing this big commission. Evidently he had been turning it over and over in his mind, and he was desperately nervous lest he might lose what he had counted on having all along ever since his marriage. He refrained from telling his wife that he felt she had seconded him feebly in this matter; for she knew the judge, and Pemberton, and Everett, too, a great deal better than he did. They had always paid her rather marked attention.

Helen said nothing. There was nothing in her surprised and grieved heart to be said. For the first time she saw clearly what manner of man her husband was. She knew how he felt about his uncle. He was vindictive about him, and seemed to welcome this job as a chance to get even with the old man for slighting him in his will. For some reason unknown to her he had not tried at the time of his death to break his will and show his ingratitude, and now he regretted that he had displayed so much forbearance.

This sudden sight of the nakedness of the man she loved dulled her heart so that she could not view the thing simply. It was impossible for her to see that there was nothing very dreadful in her husband's attitude, nothing more than a little ordinary human selfishness, sharpened by that admirable system of civilized self-interest which our philosophers and statesmen so delight to praise. She had been dreaming that her husband might have the honor to design this great building as a testimonial, a monument of gratitude, to the man who had succored his youth, who had given him his education! Her sentiment turned rancid in her heart.

"Now if Everett or the judge should say anything to you, give you a chance, you know what it means to me," Jackson remarked finally, as he put his boots outside the door for the man to get in the morning. He had meant to say more than this, to point out to her in detail the service she could do them both. Something in her manner, however, restrained him, and he contented himself with this final hint.

But Helen had stepped back into the dressing-room and did not hear him. When she returned her husband was already in bed, and his eyelids were closed in sleep. She placed herself beside him and turned out the light.

She lay there a long, long time, her open eyes staring upward into the darkness, her arms stretched straight beside her, as she used to lie when she was a little child, and her nurse had told her to be good and not to stir. Something strange had happened that day, something impalpable, unnamable, yet true, and of enormous impor-

tance to the woman. The man who lay there beside her, her husband, the indivisible part of her, had been suddenly cut from her soul, and was once more his own flesh — some alien piece of clay, and ever so to be.

She did not cry or moan. She was too much stunned. All the little petty manifestations of character, unobserved through those five years of marriage, were suddenly numbered and revealed to her. It was not a question of blame. They declared themselves to her as finalities, just as if she had suddenly discovered that her husband had four toes instead of five. He was of his kind, and she was of her kind. Being what she was, she could no longer worship him, being what he was. And her nature craved the privilege of worship. That thin, colorless protestantism of her fathers had faded into a nameless moralism. She had no Christ before whom she could pour her adoration and love. Instead, she had taken to herself a man; and now the clay of his being was crumbling in her hands. . . .

Outside the room the lake began to clamor on the sands beneath the bluff. It called her by its insistent moan. She rose from the bed and stepped out upon the little balcony that looked eastward from their room. The warm night was filled with a damp mist that swathed the tree trunks to their branches and covered the slow-moving waves of the lake. Through this earth fog there was moving a current from some distant point, touching the sleeping town.

All the unquiet feelings that latterly had been rising in her soul — Venetia's bold challenge, Hussey's harsh

words, her own dissatisfaction with the empty life of getting and spending — now hardened into judgment. The poor bookbinder was right: it was useless, perhaps, to mix the two orders of life, — those that labor for mere living and those that labor for luxury. But here in the superb indifference of nature she knew herself to be kin with him, the man of the people, the common man, whose lot it was to labor for his scanty bread. Surely a new order of the world was to be born, wherein the glory of life should not be for the ferocious self-seekers, wherein all that was fine in man should not be tainted with greed!

She held her arms out to the mist, vaguely, blindly, demanding some compensation for living, some justification that she knew not of. And there in the vigil of the misty night the woman was born. From a soft, yielding, dreaming, feminine thing, there was born a new soul — definite, hard, and precise in its judgment of men and life. . . .

In the house behind her slept her husband and her two boys, — her children and his. But only in the words of the sentimentalists are children a sufficient joy to woman's heart. Loving as she was by nature, nevertheless she asked more of God than her two boys, whose little lives no longer clung to hers by the bonds of extreme infancy. They were growing to become men; they, too, like her husband, would descend into the market for the game which all men play. The fear of it gripped her heart.

And at last she wept, miserably, for the forlorn wreck

of her worship, longing for the glorious man she had once adored.

The next morning she said to her husband: —

"Francis, I want to go back to the city this winter."

"Well — there's time to think of it — you may change your mind by the fall."

She said no more, but the first step in her new life had been taken.

CHAPTER XVIII

Everett Wheeler could hardly be reckoned as a man of sentiment. Yet in the matter of selecting an architect for the new school he stood out persistently against the wishes of Pemberton and Judge Phillips, with but one sentimental argument, — the Powers Jackson trustees must give the commission for building the great school to the nephew of the founder, without holding a competitive trial of any sort.

"It's only square," he insisted. "Jackson was disappointed about the will. He had some grounds for feeling badly used, too. He might have made us a good deal of trouble at the time, and he didn't."

"Powers would think it queer to pass him by," Hollister urged also, "seeing he gave the boy a first-class education to be an architect. And he's a hustling, progressive fellow from all I hear. I must say I admire the way he's settled into the collar since his uncle died. Why shouldn't we give him this boost?"

These remarks were made at one of the many informal meetings of the trustees, which were held almost daily now that the plans for the school were shaping themselves toward action. Pemberton, with whom the others happened to be taking their luncheon, glanced sharply at

Wheeler. Although not given to suspecting his neighbors of indirect motives, Pemberton understood Wheeler well enough to know that when the lawyer fell back upon sentiment there must be another motive in the background. The close relationship between the men was not sufficient to account wholly for the cold lawyer's unexpected zeal in behalf of the young architect. Everett Wheeler was not one to be moved by family ties. Pemberton had not forgotten Mrs. Hart's sudden interest in this commission, which he had attributed to an unwise eagerness for her husband's profit. It occurred to him now that he had once heard in past years of Everett Wheeler's devotion to Nellie Spellman.

"I can't see that it follows that we should put this plum into his mouth," the judge remarked testily. "If Powers had wanted to give the chap any more money, he would have left it to him. You must excuse me, Everett, for speaking my mind about your cousin; but, frankly, I don't altogether like the fellow. He's too smooth, too easy with all the world."

"That's all right, judge. I'm not urging him because he's my cousin. But we know why you are down on him," Wheeler answered, with a smile. "He did let your sister-in-law in for a good deal."

"Well, it isn't just that. Of course he was beginning then, and wanted to make his first job as big as possible — that's natural enough. And I guess Louise — Well, it's her affair. She manages her own property, and I wouldn't let her spend any of the children's money.

But I don't like Hart's methods. Raymond was telling me the other day how he worked him for that railroad job — through — through a woman. I suppose it's all right; the man must get business where he can. It's hard for youngsters to make a living these days. But to get a woman to pull off a thing like that for you! And Raymond told me they had to drop him, too — he didn't do the work economically, or something of the sort."

"I guess there's another story to that, perhaps," Wheeler answered patiently. "Jack wasn't willing to let Bushfield make all he wanted to off the contracts. I happen to know that. And I don't see why you should have it in for him because he got a lady to say a good word for him with Raymond. You know well enough that pretty nearly all the big commissions for public buildings in this city have gone by favor, — family or social or political pull. It's got to be so. You're bound to think that the man you know is bigger than the other fellow you don't know."

"That is not a good reason, Mr. Wheeler, why we should do the same thing in this case," Pemberton objected stiffly. "It would have been well for American architecture if it had happened less often. The proper way in the case of all public buildings is to hold an open competition."

"Well, we won't argue that question. But this is a special case. Here is a man who happens to be a nephew of the founder, who knows more of our plans than any other architect, naturally, and can give us pretty much all his attention. He'll push the work faster."

"We can wait," Pemberton still demurred. "There is no need for undue haste."

"No, no, John," Judge Phillips protested. "I am getting to be an old man. I want to see the school started and feel that my duty's done. We've thrashed this out long enough. Let us try Hart and be done with it."

Pemberton had been added to their number at the suggestion of the judge, because of his well-known public spirit and his interest in educational and philanthropic enterprises. He had undertaken his duties with his accustomed energy and conscientiousness, and at times wearied even the judge with his scruples. The others had rather hazy ideas as to the exact form, educationally, that the large fund in their charge should assume. Wheeler concerned himself mainly with the financial side of the trust. Hollister, who had got his education in a country school, and Judge Phillips, who was a graduate of a small college, merely insisted that the school should be "practical," with "no nonsense." After they had rejected the plan of handing over the bequest to a university, Pemberton had formed the idea of founding a technological school, modelled closely after certain famous Eastern institutions. This conception Helen had somewhat disturbed by her talk with him, in which she had vigorously presented the founder's democratic ideas on education. Her views had set him to thinking on the problem once more, and he had discussed the matter with the intimate friends of the founder, seeking to discover the old man's real purpose in his benefaction.

In his perplexity Pemberton had gone East to see the president of a university, of which he was one of the trustees, and there he had met a professor in the scientific department, one Dr. Everest, a clever organizer of educational enterprises. Dr. Everest did not find it difficult to convince the puzzled trustee that his dilemma was an imaginary one, that all warring ideals of education might be easily "harmonized" by a little judicious "adjustment." There should be some domestic science for the girls, manual training combined with technical and commercial courses for the boys, and all would be right, especially if the proper man were employed to mix these ingredients. In brief, the doctor came to Chicago at the invitation of the trustees, looked over the ground, and spoke at several public dinners on the "ideals of modern education." His eloquent denunciation of a "mediæval" education, his plea for a business education for a business people, and especially his alert air and urbane manners convinced the trustees that they had found a treasure. Dr. Everest was invited to become the head of the new school, which was to be called the Jackson Industrial Institute.

Hart attended one of the dinners where the new director spoke, and afterward engaged Dr. Everest in a long conversation about the new school. They found themselves agreed that it ought to be housed "monumentally," whatever happened. Later, Dr. Everest spoke warmly to Pemberton of the intelligent young architect, whom he understood might be asked to design the building. His views, he said, were "progressive"

and "inspiring," and Jackson praised the director warmly to his wife; but Helen, who had read all his utterances in the papers, felt that the clever doctor, however much of an "educator" he might be, knew absolutely nothing about the one class in the community he had been engaged to work for. His ideas about education were strictly those of the merchant class, the only class in America that the "higher education" concerned itself with.

However all that might be, Dr. Everest's good word, more than Wheeler's persistency, prevailed against Pemberton's prejudices. The architect was in a fair way of winning the long-coveted prize.

When Everett Wheeler had finally obtained the consent of his associates to ask the architect to meet the trustees and the new director and discuss plans for the building, the lawyer was so pleased that he broke an engagement for dinner, and took the train to Forest Park instead. He might have telephoned the architect at his office, but, sluggish as he was temperamentally, he had long promised himself the pleasure of telling Helen personally the good news. Of late she had not seemed wholly happy, and he supposed that there were money troubles in the household which would now be relieved.

He found a number of people in the studio on the bluff, and sat down patiently to wait. It had been a warm day, and the men and women were lounging comfortably on the grass mats, gossiping and enjoying the cool air from the lake. Jackson was in high spirits.

telling Irish stories, a social gift which he had recently cultivated. Wheeler found himself near Venetia Phillips, who was nursing a sprained elbow, the result of being pitched against a fence by a vicious horse.

"Why don't you go over there and try your charms on Helen?" she asked Wheeler peevishly. "She's been out of sorts all this summer. When you see the solemn way good married women take their happiness, it doesn't encourage you to try your luck and be good. I wonder if she and Jackie scrap? She looks as if she had a very dull life."

"Are you thinking of trying *your* chances?" the lawyer asked with a heavy attempt at the flippant tone. "You ought to have let me know."

"Do you mean that as an offer? Does it lead up to anything?"

"I'll put it in legal form, if you will give me the chance."

"Should I consent to be bored with one Everett Wheeler, a lawyer, specially successful in making bad corporations, something of a politician, not yet fifty, no known vices, easy with women? Is that the question?"

"You flatter me."

"Wait a moment. I want a good man — a blue-ribbon, high-geared saint; or something equally clever of the other kind. Are you good enough?"

"Well, I guess I could pass with the rest."

"That's the trouble. You are just about up to the average of the crowd. You wouldn't steal, and you

wouldn't run away with any one's wife. You're too knowing; it wouldn't pay."

"You're right there!"

"And if I get into trouble any time, you're just the man I'd go to. You wouldn't make remarks of a moral nature, and you would know how to squeeze me through a little hole. But you wouldn't do to marry."

"Oh, I don't know — I'd be easy."

"Too tolerant — that's the trouble."

"You are a wise young woman."

"Yes, I'm very wise about men. I'm going to write a book about men I have known well. It will be read, too. Do you want to go in?"

"Well, let's drop me. What about Helen and Jack? What's the matter?"

"I can't make out exactly. Unsatisfied aspirations, or something of the sort. I should guess that our Jackson doesn't come up to specifications. She sighs for the larger world. Did you ever meet a chap who used to give lessons in binding paper books? That was some years ago, when earnest ladies were all trying to do something with their hands to revive the arts and crafts. His name was Hussey. He was a poor, thin little man, with a wife dying from consumption or something of the sort. I have always thought Helen wanted to run away with Mr. Hussey, but couldn't get up her courage. They used to talk socialism and anarchy and strikes until the air was red, so Maida told me. It was sport to see him and Jackson get together. Jack would offer him a cigar, — the bad kind he keeps for the men

on his buildings. Hussey would turn him down, and then Helen would ask the bookbinder to luncheon or dinner, and that would give Jack a fit. But Hussey wouldn't stay. He had ideas about the masses not mixing with the classes until the millennium comes. Helen would argue with him, but it was no use. He thought nothing was on the square. Well, one day he got huffy about something Jack said, so Maida says, and went off and never turned up again at the class. Helen tried to find him; I don't think she ever got over it. And only the other day she ran across him again, Jack told me. I believe that Hussey was the man for her. She is another unsatisfied soul. I am going now, and you had better try to cheer her up."

It was beyond the lawyer's power, however, to penetrate Helen's mood. She seemed curiously removed from the scene. The banter and talk of the people on the veranda passed over her unheeded; while her eyes rested dreamily on the trees, among which the summer twilight was stealing. To rouse her attention, Wheeler brought forth his news.

"I came out here to tell you something, Nell," he said.

"What is it?" she asked indifferently.

"Jack is going to build the school. It has just been decided to-day."

She gave a little start, as though his words brought her back to the present, but she said nothing.

"The trustees have come around to it at last. You know Pemberton and the judge wanted a public competition, or something of the kind."

"Why don't they have a competition?" she asked quickly. And aroused suddenly, with nervous animation, as if she resented the suggestion of a special favor, she continued, "It would be much fairer to have an open competition!"

"Why should we? Isn't Jack the old man's nephew?"

She made no reply, and he said nothing more, dampened by the way she took his splendid news. In a little while the others left and they had dinner. Wheeler expected Helen would tell her husband of the decision, but she seemed to have forgotten it. So, finally, he was forced to repeat his announcement. He dropped it casually and coldly:—

"Well, Jack, we're getting that school business cleared up. Can you meet the trustees and the doctor at my office some day this week?"

Jackson bubbled over with glee.

"Hoorah!" he shouted. "Good for you, Everett! We must have up some champagne."

The lawyer, watching Helen's impassive face, felt inclined to moderate Jackson's enthusiasm.

"Of course, nothing's settled as to the commission. You'll be asked to prepare sketches after you have consulted with Dr. Everest. That's all."

That was enough for the architect. He thought that he could satisfy the director, and if he succeeded with him, the rest of the way was clear. When the champagne came, he pressed his thanks on his cousin.

"It's awfully good of you, Everett. I know all the

trouble you have taken for me in this matter. You'll have to let me build that camp in the Adirondacks this fall. My heavens!" he went on, too excited to be cautious, "you don't know what a load it takes off my shoulders! I can feel myself free once more. It's a big thing, the first big thing that's come my way since I began. How much do the trustees mean to put into the building?"

"That depends," the lawyer answered cautiously. "It will be over half a million, anyway, I should suppose — maybe nearer a million."

"It's a great opportunity!" the architect exclaimed, conscious that the more elevated and ideal aspects of the subject were slipping out of sight. "It doesn't come every day, the chance to build a monument like the school."

"You're quite right," Wheeler assented.

In his excitement, Hart left his seat and began to pace the floor, his hands twisting his napkin nervously. Meanwhile Helen was watching the bubbles break in her champagne glass. Her face had remained utterly blank, although she seemed to be listening to her husband. Perhaps, thought the lawyer, she did not realize what this news meant. So he remarked deliberately: —

"It's a big commission, fast enough, if you get it, and there's no reason why you shouldn't have it. I don't know of another young fellow in your line in this city who's had the same chance to make his reputation at one stroke."

Even this did not rouse the wife to speech. A flush stole over her face at the lawyer's words; but her eyes

remained buried in the champagne glass, which she twirled gently between her fingers, thus keeping up the effervescence. Jackson was jubilant enough for two.

"Dr. Everest and I were talking about the site the other day," he said. "You have only two blocks. There should be four, at least. You must give dignity to the main building by some kind of approach. The thing should be done in stone, if possible. But if that's too costly, we might try a glazed tile; you can get very good effects in that. But stone, of course, is the proper thing."

"You may find the judge and Pemberton pretty stubborn on matters of detail," Wheeler remarked cautiously.

But the architect flirted his napkin buoyantly. He had dealt with building committees before, and he had found that trustees usually took their duties lightly.

"Well, what do you think of it, Nell?" the lawyer asked finally.

"Oh! I?" She looked up blankly from the glass of wine. "It is a great chance, of course."

This joyless attitude, unremarked by her husband, caused Wheeler to suspect that there were deeper troubles in this household than money worries.

After a little more talk in which Helen did not take part the lawyer left to take his train for the city, and Jackson walked to the station with him. When he returned he found Helen still sitting at the empty table. His eyes were aflame with the golden light of opportunity. He put his hand over his wife's shoulder and pressed her cheek affectionately.

"It's great, isn't it, Nell?" he said.

She looked up into his face with a wistful smile. The good news had changed him wonderfully, even in this brief hour, erasing already some lines from his face. It seemed as if his nature was not one to grow strong in the storms of life, but needed, rather, the warmth of prosperity.

"It's great, isn't it?" he repeated, desiring to savor the good fortune with her.

"Yes, Francis," she replied slowly, and added almost pleadingly, "and you must do it greatly."

"Of course," he assented cheerily. "It'll be the best yet—don't you worry!"

CHAPTER XIX

About six miles from the centre of the city on the South Side, not far from the lake, might be seen the foundations and first two stories of a considerable building that had been abandoned for several years. It was to have been a hotel, but its promoters, who were small capitalists from a distant city, had been caught in the real estate disasters of '93. Litigation ensuing among themselves, nothing had ever been done with the property. The unfinished walls, standing at the corner of one of the boulevards and overlooking a large park, were a landmark in the neighborhood. A thick growth of weeds partially covered the loose piles of brick and stone that littered the ground and filled the hollow shell. Desolate, speedily disintegrating, the ruin stood there, four windowless walls, a figure of unsubstantial and abortive enterprise.

Hart had often passed the ruin when his business called him to that part of the city. One day this summer, as he was driving through the park with Graves on his way to inspect the last string of cheap stone houses that the contractor had built, Graves called his attention to the place.

"That pile must be pretty well covered with tax liens,"

the contractor observed, as they turned into the boulevard and approached the ruin. "It's a sightly piece of property, too, and the right spot for a family hotel."

"Who are the owners?" Hart asked.

"A lot of little fellers out in Omaha; they got to fightin' among themselves. It might be had cheap. Let's go over and take a look at the place."

He hitched his horse to a tree in front of the ruin, and the two men pushed their way through the weeds and rubbish into the cellar.

"Pretty solid foundations," the contractor observed, picking at a piece of mortar with the blade of his clasp knife. "There's most enough stone lying around here to trim the whole building. What do you think of the walls? Has the frost eat into 'em much?"

They scrambled in and out among the piers and first story walls, testing the mortar, scraping away the weeds here and there to get a closer view of the joints. The upper courses of the brick had been left exposed to the weather and were obviously crumbling. The architect thought that the outer walls might have to be rebuilt almost from the foundations. But the contractor observed that it would be sufficient to rip off half a dozen courses of the masonry, as the walls were needlessly thick.

"Those fellers thought they were going to build a jim-dandy Waldorf, judging from the amount of stone they were putting in," the contractor remarked, as they climbed into the buggy and resumed their way to the city. "I guess it wouldn't be much of a risk to buy up the tax rights. The land and material would be worth it."

"I should say so," the architect assented, seeing how the matter was shaping itself in his companion's mind.

"Those foundations would take a pretty big building, eight or ten stories."

"Easily."

They talked it over on their way back to the city. The contractor had already formed a plan for utilizing the property. He had in mind the organization of a construction company, which would pay him for building the hotel with its bonds, and give him a large bonus of stock besides. The architect was familiar with that method of finance. The hotel when finished would be rented to another company for operation, and by that time the contractor and his friends would have disposed of their stock and bonds.

"You must let me in on this," Jackson said boldly, as they neared the city. "I'm getting sick of doing your dinky instalment-plan suburban villas and getting nothing out of it. I want to make some money, and this scheme looks pretty good."

"There's no reason why you shouldn't make something, too," the contractor answered readily. "You might interest some of your rich friends in the company, and get a block of stock for yourself."

Hart had a pressing need of ready money rather than such dubious promoter's profits. Rainbow and Harris had not pushed him to pay the balance against him on their books, but their leniency would not extend beyond the first of the month. Then, if he could not get the money in some other way, he should have to go to his

mother, or take the little legacy that his uncle had left Helen. That very day he had had it in his mind to ask the contractor to let him have twelve thousand dollars on his note, which would get him out of his immediate difficulties. He could pay it with the first return from the school commission, on which he was reckoning.

But when Graves described the hotel project, he resolved to wait a little longer, in the hope that somehow he might make more than enough to pay his debts. What he needed was some capital. It was to obtain this independent capital that he had ventured with the broker. Why had he not had the wit to see the chance that lay in that old ruin and use it on his own account? For the last five years many men that he knew had been making fortunes, while he was working hard for precarious wages. No matter what he might earn in his profession, he could never feel at ease, have enough for his ambitions. He saw that his fees from the practice of architecture would never satisfy him. He must have capital, — money that would breed money independently of his exertions. Latterly his mind had turned much about this one desire.

"You'll want me to draw the plans for the hotel, I suppose?" he asked the contractor.

"Yes, you might get up some sketches for a ten-story building right away — something to show the men I want to interest in the scheme," Graves answered promptly. "When you have 'em ready, come around and we'll see if we can't fix up some kind of deal."

It was evident that the contractor had gone much

farther in the hotel matter than he had told Hart. Probably he had already taken measures to get control of the abandoned property and had his corporation organized.

At this point Jackson learned from Everett that the trustees were ready to ask him for preliminary sketches for the school, and almost at the same time he received a polite note from the brokers calling his attention to his debt. He went at once to Graves's office and asked the contractor for the loan, saying that he was to have the school and should be put to extraordinary expenses in his office for the next few months. The contractor let him have the money readily enough on his personal note. Graves did not speak of the hotel, and for the moment the school had driven all else from the architect's mind. He was kept busy these days by consultations with the trustees and the director of the school, getting their ideas about the building. One morning the newspapers had an item, saying that "F. J. Hart, the prominent young architect, nephew of the late Powers Jackson, had received the commission for building the new Jackson Institute, and was engaged in drawing plans for a magnificent structure, which in luxury and completeness would outrank any similar institution in the country." Before noon that same day Hart received a curt message from Judge Phillips to call at his office, and foreseeing trouble with the trustees about the newspaper paragraph, he went scowling into the draughting-room.

"Some of you boys must have been talking loose about what's going on in this office," he said accusingly.

"The *Tribune* man had the story straight enough when he came in here," Cook replied in defence. "He must have got it from some one who knew what he was talking about."

Hart went over to the judge's office and tried to explain matters to the old gentleman, who, besides having a great dislike of "newspaper talk," felt that the trustees were being deliberately coerced into giving their commission to this pushing young man. The architect was forced to swallow some peppery remarks about indelicate methods of securing business. When he left the judge, who was only half convinced of his sincerity, he went to see Graves, and vented his irritation on the contractor.

"You let things leak out of your office. You got me into hot water by giving out that story about the school."

"How so? It's straight, ain't it? You've got the building? You said so the other day when you came in here to borrow that money."

"It amounts to the same thing, though it hasn't been formally settled. They are touchy enough about their old job. They've asked me to prepare the first sketches — that's all so far."

"Oh! That's all, is it?" the contractor remarked coldly. "I thought you had the job in your inside pocket from the way you talked the other day."

Hart's face reddened and he stammered:—

"It's all right. They are sure to take me, only they are a little slow, and I don't want to seem to force them."

Graves continued to examine the man before him with his shrewd little eyes, and Hart realized that the contrac-

tor had given the news to the papers for the precise purpose of finding out where the trustees stood.

"Well, when you get ready to build the school I expect we shall be doing a good deal of business together," Graves remarked tentatively.

The architect moved back in his chair, more comfortable at the change in the conversation.

"I shall want you to bid, of course. But I don't know yet whether the trustees mean to let the contract as a whole."

"They'll do pretty much what you say, won't they? Ain't one of them your cousin?"

"Yes."

"Well, I want that contract. Can't you fix it so's I can get it?"

Hart knew altogether too well what the contractor meant by this blunt request. An architect has it in his power to draw his specifications in such a manner that only a few favored contractors will dare to bid. If outsiders venture to bid for the work, they cannot with safety go low enough to get the contract. In the case of a large building this is a more difficult manœuvre to manage than with less important work. Yet even with a building of the importance of the projected school, contractors would be chary of bidding against a man who was as closely identified with the architect as Graves was with Hart.

"They say now," Hart protested, "that nobody else gets a show in my office."

"I don't believe you see what there might be in this

for you, Mr. Hart," the contractor persisted, without replying directly to the architect's objection.

A stenographer interrupted them at this point, and the architect had a few moments to think while Graves was engaged. He knew better than any one else the devious methods of the contractor, and it had already occurred to him that this would be a good opportunity to sever his close connection with the Graves Construction Company. He would, of course, allow Graves to bid on the school contracts, but would show him no favors. Yet the contractor's last words made him reflect. There was the hotel with its unknown possibilities of large returns. Moreover, the Graves Construction Company was no longer the weak enterprise that it had been five years before. Graves had made a great deal of money these last prosperous years, and his "corporation" was one of the largest of its kind in the city. It would be stupid to break with the man altogether.

"Come, this ain't quiet enough here. Let's step over to Burke's and talk it out," the contractor suggested, looking up from the papers the stenographer had brought in.

So the two men went across the street to Burke's, which was a quiet sort of drinking-place, frequented by the better class of sporting men. In the rear there were a number of little rooms, where whispered conversations intended for but two pairs of ears were often held. When the negro attendant had wiped the mahogany table and brought them their whiskey, Graves began: —

"Mr. Hart, I'm going to give you the chance of your

life to make a lump of money, sure and quick, and no gold-brick proposition, either."

Graves poured himself a drink, and meditatively twirled the small glass between his fat fingers before he explained himself.

"You do the right thing by me in this school job, and I'll see that you are properly fixed on the hotel scheme."

The details of the plan came cautiously and slowly from the contractor, while Hart listened in a non-committal frame of mind. The thing proposed was really very simple. The architect was to draw the school specifications so that only a few firms would bid, and of these only one or two would be genuine competitors. The contractor would see to it that there were enough bidders at approximately his own figure to prevent suspicion on the part of the trustees. In return for this favor, Graves offered a large block of stock in the hotel company, "for doing the plans of the hotel," which he was ready to guarantee would be worth a certain sum.

Of course there was an unspecified item in the transaction, which was perfectly obvious to the architect. If the contractor was ready to make these terms in order to obtain the school, there must be enough in the job above the legitimate profit on the contract to make it well worth his while. The architect saw, less sharply, that this extra profit would be made, more or less, with his professional connivance. It would be impossible to get the trustees to accept bids so high that the contractor could reap his profit and still do the work up to the specifications. It would be necessary to specify needlessly elabo-

rate steel work, cut stone, and interior finish, with the understanding that the Graves Company would not be forced to live up to these gilt-edged specifications. It might be necessary, even, to prepare two sets of specifications for the more important parts of the contract, — one for the bidding, and one for the use of the subcontractors, — although that would be dangerous.

Hart smoked and listened, while Graves, having outlined his plan, spoke of the profit to the architect.

"If you want, I'll agree to take the hotel stock off your hands at par from time to time as the two buildings go up. You can figure out now what you'll make. It will not be far from seventy thousand dollars, what with your commissions and the stock. And I'll guarantee, Hart, that you'll have no trouble. That drunken Dutchman can work over any details that have to be fixed — my own expense. Nothing need go through your office that ain't first-class and regular."

The plan seemed perfectly simple, and the architect's imagination fastened on the big bait which the contractor held out. Graves repeated slowly in his thick tones: —

"A year, or say eighteen months, from now, you'll have about seventy-five thousand dollars in the bank."

That would be capital! The lack of capital had tripped him at every turn. With that amount of money, he could plant his feet firmly on the earth and prepare to spring still higher.

"Of course," Graves continued, "you'd stand by me — help me out with the trustees if there was any kick."

In other words, for the term of a year or eighteen

months he would be this contractor's creature. But the architect was thinking of something else. . . .

The line between what is honest and dishonest in business is a difficult one to plot. From generation to generation standards alter in the business world as elsewhere, and to-day men will do unblushingly, and with the approval of their fellows, that which in another generation will, doubtless, become a penitentiary offence. Business is warfare, and whatever men may say on Sundays, the hardy man of business will condone a thrifty sin of competition sooner than any other sin. Every one of the fighters in the battle knows how hard it is to make a dollar honestly or dishonestly, and he prefers to call certain acts "indelicate" or "unprofessional," rather than dishonest.

Of such "unprofessional" conduct Hart had been guilty a number of times, and the matter had not troubled him greatly. But this arrangement, which the contractor was urging, was of more positive stripe. Although it was not clear how close a connivance with fraud would be necessary, it might involve outright rascality, which, if it became known in the community, would ruin his professional standing for life. He would be taking a great risk to grasp that promised lump of money. While Graves talked in his thick, guttural tones, Hart was weighing this risk. The whiskey that he had been drinking had not obscured his vision in the least, although it shed a rosier glow over the desired capital. It must be admitted that the architect gave little consideration to the trustees or to his uncle's be-

quest. It would have pleased him, if he had thought much about it, to make a good round hole in his uncle's millions, of which the old man had deprived him. And as for the trustees, they were shrewd men of the world, quite able to take care of themselves.

But, instinctively, he recoiled from the act. He would much prefer a clean, honorable, "high-class" career. If he could have secured money enough to satisfy his ambitions, to lead the kind of life he liked, without resort to such knavery as this, it would have been much pleasanter. But in one way or another he must make money, and make it more rapidly and more abundantly than he had been doing. That was success. When he had come to this point, he had already consented with himself. . . .

They had been sitting there nearly two hours, but latterly little had been said. The contractor was patient and diplomatic. Finally he asked, "Well, Hart, what do you say?"

Hart lighted another cigar before speaking, and then replied deliberately: "I will think over what you say. I understand that the stock is given me instead of my regular commission on the hotel, and will be worth a fixed sum?"

"That's it!"

Then they went out into the street without further words. Hart returned to his office, examined his mail, wrapped up his first sketches for the school, and set out for the train. The deal with Graves unconsciously filled his mind and made him feel strange to himself. Yet

he thought less of the practical detail of the transaction than of certain specious considerations concerning the morality of what he was going to do.

Business was war, he said to himself again and again, and in this war only the little fellows had to be strictly honest. The big ones, those that governed the world, stole, lied, cheated their fellows openly in the market. The Bushfields took their rake-off; the Rainbows were the financial pimps, who fattened on the vices of the great industrial leaders. Colonel Raymond might discharge a man on his road who stole fifty cents or was seen to enter a bucket shop, but in the reorganization of the Michigan Northern ten years previously, he and his friends had pocketed several millions of dollars, and had won the lawsuits brought against them by the defrauded stockholders.

It was a world of graft, the architect judged cynically. Old Powers Jackson, it was said in Chicago, would cheat the glass eye out of his best friend in a deal. He, too, would follow in the path of the strong, and take what was within his reach. He would climb hardily to the top, and then who cared? That gospel of strenuous effort, which our statesmen and orators are so fond of shouting forth, has its followers in the little Jackson Harts. Only, in putting forth their strong right arms, they often thrust them into their neighbors' pockets. And the irresponsible great ones, who have emerged beyond the reign of law, have their disciples in all the strata of society, — down, down to the boy who plays the races with the cash in his employer's till.

The architect went home to his wife and children with the honest love that he bore them. If they had entered his mind in connection with this day's experience, he would have believed that largely for their sakes, for their advancement in the social scheme of things, he had engaged upon a toilsome and disagreeable task. For he did not like slippery ways.

CHAPTER XX

HART's design for the school had finally been accepted by the trustees, and the plans were placed on exhibition in the Art Institute. Little knots of people — students, draughtsmen, and young architects — gathered in the room on the second floor, where the elevations had been hung, and had their say about the plans. Occasionally a few older men and women, interested in the nobler aspects of civic life, drifted into the room, having stolen some moments from their busy days to see what the architect had done with his great opportunity.

"Gee! Ain't it a hummer, now!" exclaimed one of Wright's men, who had known Hart in the old days. "He's let himself out this time, sure. It will cover most two blocks."

"The main part of the design is straight from the Hôtel de Ville," one of the young architects objected disdainfully. He and his friends thought there were many better architects in the city than F. Jackson Hart, and grumbled accordingly. "I bet I could find every line in the design from some French thing or other. Hart's an awful thief; he can't think for himself."

"Where is the purpose of the structure expressed?" another demanded severely. "It would do just as

well for the administration building of a fair as for a school!" . .

"A voluptuous and ornamental design; the space is wickedly wasted in mere display. The money that ought to go into education will be eaten up in this pretentious, flaunting building that will cover all the land." . . .

"What have I been telling you?" commented an admiring citizen to his neighbor. "Chicago ain't a village any more. A few buildings like this and the university ones, and the world will begin to see what we are doing out here!"

"What's the dome for?" . . .

"I say the people should have the best there is."

"Pull, pull — that's what's written all over this plan! The architect was some sort of relation to the man who gave the school, wasn't he?"

Even Wright, who happened to be in the city, stepped into the Institute to look at the plans. He studied them closely for a few minutes, and then, with a smile on his face, moved off.

Hart had, indeed, "let himself out." It was to be a master work, and by its achievement raise him at once into the higher ranks of his profession. For the first time he had felt perfectly free to create. As often happens, when the artist comes to this desired point and looks into his soul, he finds nothing there. The design was splendid, in a sense — very large and imposing: an imperial flight of steps, a lofty dome which fastened the spectator's eyes, and two sweeping wings to support the

central mass. Nevertheless, the architect had not escaped from his training; it was another one of the Beaux Arts exercises that Wright used to "trim." Years hence the expert would assign it to its proper place in the imitative period of our arts, as surely as the literary expert has already placed there the poet Longfellow. Though Hart had learned much in the past six years, it had been chiefly in the mechanics of his art: he was a cleverer architect, but a more wooden artist. For the years he had spent in the workshop of the great city had deadened his sense of beauty. The clamor and excitement and gross delight of living had numbed his sense of the fine, the noble, the restrained. He had never had time to think, only to contrive, and facility had supplied the want of ideas. Thus he had forgotten Beauty, and been content to live without that constant inner vision of her which deadens bodily hunger and feeds the soul of the artist.

So Wright read the dead soul beneath the ambitious design.

Mrs. Phillips came rustling in with friends, to whom she exhibited the plans with an air of ownership in the architect.

"It's the cleverest thing that has been done in this city; every one says so. I tell Harrison that he has me to thank for this. It was a case of poetic justice, too. You know the story? One forgets so easily here; it's hard to remember who died last month. Why, the old man Jackson left pretty nearly every cent of his money to found this school. I think he was crazy, and I should

have fought the will if I had been a relative. At any rate, it was a nasty joke on this Mr. Hart, who was his nephew and every one thought would be his heir.

"But he has made such a plucky fight, got the respect of every one, gone right along, and succeeded splendidly in his profession. He married foolishly, too. Poor girl, not a cent, and not the kind to help him one bit, you know, — no style, can't say a word for herself. She's done a good deal to keep him back, but he has managed to survive even that. I wonder he hasn't broken with her. I do, really! They haven't a thing in common. They had a pleasant home out in the Park, you know, and a good position — every one knew them there. He is the kind to make friends everywhere. And what do you think? She made him give up his house and come into town to live! The Park was too far away from her friends, or something of the sort — wanted to educate her children in the city, and all that. I believe it was jealousy of him. He was popular, and she wasn't. No woman will stand that sort of thing, of course.

"So now they have taken a house on Scott Street, — a little, uncomfortable box, the kind of place that is all hall and dining-room. Of course they don't have to live like that; he's making money. But she says she doesn't want to be bothered — has ideas about simple living. The trouble is, she hasn't any ambition, and he's brimful of it. He could get anywhere if it weren't for her. It's a shame! I don't believe she half appreciates even this. Isn't it splendid? He has such large ideas!

"Venetia is thick with her, of course. You might know she would be. It's through Mrs. Hart she meets those queer, tacky people. I tell you, the woman counts much more than the man when it comes to making your way in the world; don't you think so?" . . .

And with further words of praise for the plans and commiseration for the architect, the widow wandered into the next room with her friends, then descended to her carriage, dismissing art and life together in the prospect of dinner.

Helen made a point of taking the boys to see their father's work, and explained carefully to them what it all meant. They followed her open-eyed, tracing with their little fingers the main features of the design as she pointed them out, and saying over the hard names. It was there Venetia Phillips found her, seated before the large sketch of the south elevation, dreaming, while the boys, their lesson finished, had slipped into the next room to look at the pictures.

"Have you seen my mother?" she asked breathlessly, seating herself beside Helen. "I brought Dr. Coburn, and we almost ran into Mrs. Phillips the first thing. So I dodged into the Greek room and left him there to study anatomy. She had that horrid Rainbow woman with her and would have been nasty to the doctor. Mother is such a splendid snob!" she explained frankly.

"Well, well, our Jackie has done himself proud this time, hasn't he? He's a little given to the splurge, though, don't you think?"

Helen did not answer. She did not like to admit even to herself that her husband's greatest effort was a failure. Yet she was a terribly honest woman, and there was no glow in her heart. Indeed, the school and all about it had become unpleasant to her, covered as it was with sordid memories of her husband's efforts to get the work. Latterly there had been added to these the almost daily bickerings with the trustees, which the architect reported. The plans had not been accepted easily.

"All the same, Jack's got some good advertising out of it," Venetia continued encouragingly, noticing Helen's silence. "The newspapers are throwing him polite remarks, I see. But I want to talk to you about something else. Mamma has been losing a lot of money; bad investments made in boom times; sure things, you know, like copper and steel. She's very much pressed, and she wants to put my money up to save some of the stocks. Uncle Harry is raging, and wants me to promise him not to let her have a cent. Stanwood has come home — there doesn't seem to be anything else for him to do. It's all rather nasty. I don't know what to say about the money; it seems low to hold your mother up in her second youth. And yet the pace Mrs. Phillips keeps would finish my money pretty soon. It's a pity Mrs. Raymond won't die and give mother a chance to make a good finish."

"Venetia!"

"What's the harm in my saying what all the world that knows us is saying? It's been a ten years' piece

of gossip. I feel sorry for her, too. It must be rough to get along in life and see you have muckered your game. . . . Do you know, I am terribly tempted to let her have the money, all of it, and skip out myself. Perhaps some of these days you'll read a little paragraph in the morning paper, — 'Mysterious Disappearance of a Well-known Young Society Woman.' Wouldn't that be original? Just to drop out of everything and take to the road!"

"What would you do?"

"Anything, everything — make a living. Don't you think I could do that?" She embroidered this theme fancifully for a time and then lapsed into silence. Finally she burst forth again: "Good Lord, why can't we get hold of life before it's too late? It's going on all around us, — big, and rich, and full of blood. And folks like you and me sit on the bank, eating a picnic lunch."

"Perhaps," mused Helen, "it would be different if one had to earn the lunch."

"Who knows? Will you try it? Will you cut loose from Jackie?"

A rather sad smile crossed the older woman's face, and Venetia seizing her arm impulsively gave it a little squeeze. Just then Coburn strolled into the room with the boys, whom he had found in the corridor, and nodding abruptly toward Helen, stood before the plans, studying them with his sharp, black eyes. His little ironical smile hung on his parted lips. Turning to Venetia, he said good-humoredly: —

"Thinks he's doing something, don't he, Venetia?"

Helen rose and called the boys.

"A building is just four walls and a roof to me," he continued, addressing Helen. "But Jack Hart seems to have got what he wanted — that's the chief thing, ain't it?"

Helen nodded, and they left the room without looking again at the plans. As they descended the broad flight of steps to the street, Venetia laid her hand on Helen's arm.

"Tell Jack we are all proud of him. Mamma brags of him daily. And look out for the paragraph in the paper. They'd give me a paragraph, don't you think?"

The winter twilight had descended upon the murky city, filling the long vistas of the cross streets with a veil of mystery. But the roar of the place mounted to the clouds above, which seemed to reverberate with the respirations of the Titan beneath. Here, in the heart of the city, life clamored with a more direct note than in any other spot in the world. Men were struggling fiercely for their desires, and their cries ascended to the dull heavens.

Helen walked home with the boys, soothed by the human contact of the streets. There was something exhilarating to her in the jostle of the throng, — the men and women leaving their labors, bent homeward for the night. Her heart expanded near them — those who won their daily bread by the toil of the day.

It was in part true, what the widow had said. For it was she who had willed to return to the city from the

pleasant niche where she had spent her married life, desiring in the growing emptiness of her heart to get closer to the vast life of a human people, to feel once more the common lot of man. So she had taken the little house on Scott Street, and reduced their living to the simplest scale, declaring that she wanted her time for herself and her children. Her husband was so busy that as yet he hardly noticed any change in her. They went out less than they had gone in previous years, and sometimes he thought the people he found calling on his wife were "queer." Her interest in a new kind of education for the children bored him. She seemed to be going her own way without thought of him, and now and then he wondered what it meant. He did not like aggressive, faddish persons; he wanted women to be personal and sympathetic, with a touch of "style," social tact, and a little dash.

To-night he had come from his office early, and while he waited for Helen he looked about the little drawing-room disapprovingly, with a sense of aggrieved discomfort. Helen was taking to economy and simplicity altogether too seriously to please him. To be sure, she made no objection to his keeping his hunters at the Shoreham Club, or his polo-playing, or other expensive diversions.

In a vague way he was aware of the subtle separation of soul that existed between them. He looked at his wife closely when she came in with the boys. She seemed older, more severe in face than he had thought, than her photograph on his office desk said. When this school business was done with, he reflected, they

must run over to Europe for a few months' vacation, get shaken up, and then live differently on their return. . . .

"Nell," he said to her, when they were alone, "it's settled at last, you will be glad to know, everything. We let the contracts to-day."

"For the school?" she asked indifferently. "You must be relieved to have it off your mind."

Her lips, which curved so tenderly, had grown strangely firm. He put his arm over her shoulder and drew her toward him.

"Yes, it's a great relief. I thought at one time Pemberton would make them throw the whole thing up and start again. But the others had more sense. Well, when the building is finished, we must have a spree, and get to be lovers once more."

"Yes, dear. This afternoon I've been to the Institute with the boys to let them see the plans."

"They are well spoken of. I saw Wright to-day for a moment. He stopped to congratulate me, but I couldn't tell what he really thought. Well, after all the trouble with them, I got pretty much what I wanted, thanks to Everett and the doctor. Everett's been a good friend all through. The idea of their kicking so hard because the thing was going to cost a little more than they had made up their minds to spend on the building! Pemberton thinks he knows all about architecture. It's a pity he couldn't have drawn the plans himself."

"But you saved your design. There were only a few changes, I thought."

"Yes, I've won the second round all right."

In his joy over the thought he put his strong arms about his wife and lifted her bodily from the floor, as he had often done, boyishly, in the years before. Holding her close to him he kissed her lips and neck. She returned his kisses, but the touch of her lips was cool. She seemed limp in his arms, and he felt vaguely the want of something. She was less loving, less passionate than ever before. He missed the abandon, the utter self-forgetfulness, the rush of ecstatic emotion, which from the first moment of their love had made her for him all woman, the woman of women. . . . He let her slip from his embrace and looked at her. Was it age? Was it the penalty of living, which dampens the fire of passion and dulls desire? He was troubled, distressed for the loss of something precious that was getting beyond his reach, perhaps had gone forever.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "It's bad to be always on the dead push. Come! Let's go out somewhere and have dinner and a bottle of champagne the way we used to."

She hesitated a moment, unwilling to disappoint him.

"I can't very well to-night, Francis. I promised Morton Carr I should be home this evening. He wants me to help him raise some money for his new building, and we were to discuss it."

"Oh!" he said, his egotism subtly wounded. "I remember you said something about it."

CHAPTER XXI

Late in March the corner-stone for the Jackson Institute was laid. It was a desolate winterish day, and the prairie wind chilled to the bone the little group of interested people seated on the platform erected for the occasion. There were brief speeches by Judge Phillips and Dr. Everest, and an address by a celebrated college president on the "new education." To Helen, who sat just behind him in sight of the piles of excavated sand and the dirty brick walls of the neighboring stores, the scene was scarcely in harmony with the orator's glowing generalizations. "The mighty energies of this industrial cosmopolis will now respond to the higher call of man's ideals. . . . On industry rests thrift, and on thrift must rest all education." As the neat periods slipped forth, Cook, who was standing by the mason's windlass, caught Helen's eye and smiled. He looked brisk and happy, and she could fancy him calling out: "Hey! What does the guy know about industry? But ain't this the best yet? F. J. Hart is all right!"

The architect, smartly dressed for the occasion in a new frock coat and shining silk hat, stepped forward at the proper moment, dusted the upper surface of the great stone with a brush, and handed the judge a sil-

ver trowel. Cook pushed up to them a bucket of mortar, into which the old man thrust the trowel, and tremblingly bespattered the stone. Then the windlass creaked, and down came the massive block of Indiana limestone, covering the recess into which had been stuffed some records of the present day. Then the architect and Cook busied themselves adjusting the block, while the judge stepped backward to his seat, a look of relief coming over his red face, as if he felt that he had virtually executed the trust left him by his old friend.

As the gathering dispersed, Helen's eyes fell upon a great wooden sign surmounting the workmen's shed: THE GRAVES CONSTRUCTION COMPANY — GENERAL CONTRACTORS — CHICAGO AND NEW YORK.

So this was the company that had finally secured the general contract for the building. As Helen knew, there had been vexatious delays over the bids. The first figures had been very much in excess of the sum the trustees had intended to spend upon the building. They had forced the architect to modify his plans somewhat and to ask for new bids. Pemberton had been especially obstinate, and Hart had grumbled about him to his wife: —

"Why does the old duffer chew the rag over a couple of hundred thousand, when they have over three millions, anyway? It doesn't come out of *his* pocket!"

At last, after some wrangling, the trustees had accepted the lowest bid, though it was still considerably beyond the figure they had set. Hart regarded it as a triumph:

he had saved substantially the integrity of his design, and the Graves Company got the contract.

Now all was serene. From the hour that the contract was signed, the building rose from nothingness by leaps and bounds. Graves was always rapid in his operations, and for this building he seemed to have made every preparation beforehand. The labor situation, which was still unsettled, caused him no delay. His rivals said that he had the leaders in the unions on his pay-rolls, and could build when other contractors were tied up by strikes. Other firms could not get their steel from the mills for months, but Graves had some mysterious way of securing his material when he wanted it. The day after the corner-stone was laid he had an army of men at work; early in June the walls were up to the roof trusses; by the end of July the great edifice was completely roofed in, and the plasterers were at work.

The contracts once signed, the judge and Wheeler seemed to regard that their responsibilities were over. Hollister, who had been in poor health latterly, had gone to Europe. But Pemberton was the bane of the architect's life. He visited Hart's office almost daily, looked carefully at every voucher before ordering it paid, and spent long afternoons at the works. He examined the building from foundation to roof with his thrifty New England eye, and let no detail escape him, stickling over unimportant trifles, and delaying the numerous orders for extras or alterations. The whole operation of modern building was an unknown language to him. He knew that he was ignorant of what was going on before his eyes,

and his helplessness made him improperly suspicious of the architect and the contractor. Many a time he strained Hart's habitual tact. They nearly came to blows over some window frames, which the architect had seen fit to alter without consulting the building committee.

One morning Hart found Pemberton at the school in company with a stranger, who made notes in a little memorandum book. The trustee nodded curtly to the architect, and, as he was preparing to leave, remarked casually: —

"This is Mr. Trimble, Mr. Hart. Mr. Trimble is an engineer, who has been in my employ from time to time. He will look through the works and make a report. Mr. Trimble will not interfere with you in any way, Mr. Hart. He will report to me."

The architect's face grew white with suppressed rage, and his lips trembled as he answered: —

"What is your reason for taking this step, Mr. Pemberton? When I was given the commission, nothing was said about having a superintendent. If there is to be one, he should report to me. As you know quite well, I have devoted my entire time to this building, and given up other work in order that I might be out here every day. I shall speak to the other trustees about this, and I'll not stand the insult, Mr. Pemberton!"

"Tut, tut, no insult, Mr. Hart. You must know that it's quite usual in work of this magnitude for the owners to have their representative at the works. There will be no interference with you or the contractor, if the building goes right."

The architect swallowed his anger for the time, merely answering sulkily: "Mr. Graves will take no orders except from me, of course. The contracts are so drawn."

"What's that!" Pemberton exclaimed. "I hope there will be no occasion to alter that arrangement."

The architect bowed and left the building.

"Snarling, prying old fogy," he spluttered to his wife, who was waiting outside in the automobile. "Let him put in his superintendent. I guess we can give him a run for his money."

The woman's heart sank. Somehow this school, this bit of great-hearted idealism on the part of the old man she loved, had thus far stirred up a deal of mud.

Pemberton did not think it necessary to discuss with the architect his reasons for engaging Mr. Trimble as superintendent, but he had what seemed to him sufficient cause to look into the building more thoroughly than he was able to himself. After the contract had been let, the trustees had received a number of anonymous letters, which made charges that all had not been square in getting the bids for the building. These letters had gone into the waste basket, as mere cowardly attacks from some disgruntled contractor. Then, one day while the building was still in the rough, and the tile was going in, Pemberton overheard one of the laborers say to his mate: —

"Look at that stuff, now. It ain't no good at all," and the man gave the big yellow tile a kick with his foot; "it's nothin' but dust. Them's rotten bad tiles, I tell yer."

And the other Paddy answered reflectively, scratching his elbow the while: —

"It'll go all the same. Sure, it's more money in his pocket. Ain't that so, boss?"

He appealed to Pemberton, whom he took for one of the passers-by gaping idly at the building.

"What do you mean?" the trustee demanded sharply.

"Mane? The less you pay the more you git in this wurld!"

"Hist, you fule," the other one warned, twisting his head in the direction of the boss mason, who was not far away.

Pemberton was not the man to take much thought of a laborer's idle talk. But the words remained in his mind, and a few weeks later, happening to meet the superintendent of a large construction company in the smoking-car of the Forest Park train, he asked the man some questions about fireproof building.

"Why did your people refuse to bid the second time?" he inquired finally.

"They saw it was just a waste of time and money," the man replied frankly.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, the job was slated for Graves — that was all. It was clear enough to us. There's mighty little that goes out of that office except to Graves."

"Is that so? I asked Mr. Hart particularly to have your company bid on the contracts."

Then the man became confidential, and explained how a certain ambiguity in the wording of the specifications

made it risky for a contractor to bid unless he knew just how the architect would treat him; for the contractor might easily "get stuck" for much more than the possible profits, though bidding in perfect good faith. The man was willing enough to talk, once started on the subject, and in the course of half an hour he explained to the layman some of the chicanery of the building business.

"So you see, Mr. Pemberton, the contractor, to protect himself when he doesn't know his man, bids pretty high, and then the favored contractor can safely go a good bit lower. He has an understanding with the architect, maybe, and it all depends on how the specifications are going to be interpreted."

And he told other things, — how some of the firms who had bid had since got parts of the general contract from the Graves Company, but with an altered set of specifications.

"It's queer," he ended finally. "We can't see how they'll make a cent on the contract unless Graves is goin' to rot it clear through."

He explained what he meant by "rotting" it, — the use of cheap grades of materials and inferior labor, from the foundation stones to the cornice. In other words, the building would be a "job."

"For those specifications called for a first-class building, and no mistake, — awful heavy steel work, and cabinet finish, and all that. If it's built according to specification, you're going to have a first-class school all right."

The result of this chance conversation was that after consultation with Judge Phillips, Pemberton sent to Boston for the engineer Trimble, whom he knew to be absolutely honest and capable.

When Hart left Pemberton, he went directly to Wheeler's office and exploded to his cousin. His anger at the affront offered to him had entirely hidden the thought of the disagreeable complications that might follow. He took a high stand with Wheeler about the trustees' lack of confidence in him. But the cool lawyer, after hearing his remonstrances, said placidly: —

"If Pemberton wants this man Trimble to go over the building, I don't see how you can prevent it. And I don't see the harm in it myself. I suppose everything is all right. See that it is, — that's *your* business. Pemberton would be a bad man to deal with if he found any crooked work. You'd better look sharp after that fellow Graves."

The architect assured his cousin that there was no need to worry on that score. But he began to realize the dangers ahead, and felt a degree of comfort in the fact that Graves had only that week paid him in cash for the second block of his Glenmore hotel "stock." With the previous payment he had now thirty-five thousand dollars lying in his bank, and a large payment on the commission for the school would soon be due him.

Trouble was not long in coming. Trimble, who was a quiet little man, and looked like a bookseller's clerk, was waiting for Hart one morning at the office of the

works. He made some pointed inquiries about the plumbing specifications. There seemed to be important discrepancies between the copy of the specifications at the works and the copy which Pemberton had given him from the office of the trustees.

"Yes, a good many changes were authorized. There were good reasons for making them," Hart responded gruffly.

The little man made no remarks; he seemed to have inquired out of curiosity. Then he asked questions about some blue-prints which did not correspond with the written specifications, explaining that he had gone to the mill where the interior finish was being turned out and had found other discrepancies in the details prepared for the woodwork. Hart answered indifferently that he would find a good many such changes, as was customary in all buildings. At this point Graves arrived; he came into the little shanty and looked Trimble over without speaking. After the engineer had left, Graves turned to the architect, an ugly frown on his heavy face: —

"Say, is that little cuss goin' to make trouble here?"

Hart explained briefly what had happened.

"Do you think we could fix him?" the contractor asked without further comment.

The architect noticed the "we" and sulked.

"I guess you'd better not try. He doesn't look like the kind you could fix. It's just as well that most of the work is done, for it seems to me he means trouble."

"All the finish and decoratin' is comin', ain't it?" the contractor growled. "I tell you what, if he holds up the mill work, and keeps fussin' round, there'll be more than one kind of trouble. I won't stand no nonsense from your damned trustees." He swore out his disgust and fumed, until Hart said:—

"Well, you'll have to do the best you can. And I'll try to keep the trustees quiet."

The Glenmore hotel was going up rapidly, and he thought of the twenty thousand dollars which would be coming to him on the completion of that building—if all went well. But if there should be a row, there would be no further profits for him on the hotel.

"The best I can!" Graves broke forth. "I guess you'll have to take care of them. You'd better see your cousin and get him to call this feller off, or there'll be trouble."

"I have seen Wheeler," the architect admitted.

"Well," the contractor blustered, "if they want a fight, let 'em come on. There'll be a strike on this building in twenty-four hours, I can tell you, and then it'll be years before they can get their school opened."

With this threat the contractor left the office, and Hart went over to the great building, which had become a thorn in his flesh these last weeks. It was not a bad piece of work, after all, as Chicago building was done, he reflected. Even if Graves had cut the work in places, and had made too much money on the steel, the stone, and here and there all over, the edifice would answer its purpose well enough, and the architect had no special

interest in the everlasting qualities of his structures. Nothing was built to stand for more than a generation in this city. Life moved too swiftly for that.

For several weeks, as the end of August came near, there was a lull, while Pemberton was in the East on his vacation. The work on the school went forward as before; even the irritation of seeing Trimble's face was removed, for he had ceased to visit the works. Then, the first week in September, the storm burst. There came to the architect's office a peremptory summons to meet the trustees the next afternoon.

CHAPTER XXII

Powers Jackson had given the old Jackson homestead and farm at Vernon Falls in Vermont to Helen, and with it a small legacy of twelve thousand dollars "as a maintenance fund." She had opened the house but once or twice since her marriage, because Jackson was always too busy to take a long vacation, and she did not like to leave him. Latterly she had thought about the old man's gift a good deal, and there had been some talk of her spending the summer in Vernon Falls with the children and her mother. Instead of this they had gone to the Shoreham Club for a few weeks in August, putting off the journey East till the fall.

She had never touched the legacy, leaving it in Everett Wheeler's hands, securely invested, and had paid what was needed to maintain the old place from her allowance. Now, however, a number of repairs on the buildings had accumulated, and it occurred to her one day, when she was in the city, to find out from Wheeler how much surplus she had at her disposal. They had joked a good deal about her estate, and the lawyer had scolded her for not coming to his office to examine the papers and see what he was doing with her money.

It was late in the afternoon when she had finished other, more urgent errands, and, turning into the lofty La Salle Street building, was whirled up to the twelfth floor. The middle-aged stenographer in Wheeler's office looked up on her entrance, and said that the lawyer had not left, but was engaged with some gentlemen. Would she wait? She sat down in the quiet, carpeted outer office, from which radiated several small offices. The doors of all these rooms were open except one, and through the ground-glass panel in this door she could see the dark forms of several men. Presently the stenographer pushed her papers into the drawer of her desk, and fetched her hat and coat.

"I think they must be 'most through," she remarked pleasantly. "You go right in when they come out."

Then she gathered up her gloves and left. Little noise came from the hall, except the occasional sliding back and forth of elevator gates. The vast hive seemed to be deserted at this hour, and few places in the city were so quiet and lonesome as this sober law office. The murmur of voices in the inner room was the only sound of life. Gradually the voices grew louder, but Helen paid no attention to them until a man's voice, clear and shrill with exasperation, penetrated distinctly to the outer office.

"No, Wheeler!" the man almost shouted. "We won't compromise this. I won't have it covered up or whitewashed. We'll go to the bottom, here and now. Let us find out what all this double-dealing means. Let us know, now, whether the work on that building is being

done honestly or not, and whether our architect is working for us or for the contractor against us."

It was Pemberton's voice, and Helen recognized it. From the first words she had grasped the arms of her chair — a sudden clutch at her heart. She held herself rigid, while behind the door a confused murmur of men all talking at once drowned Pemberton's voice. She tried to think whether she ought to leave the office, but her strength had gone, and she trembled in her chair. Presently Pemberton's high voice rang out again: —

"No, sir! We've given you this opportunity to explain your conduct and clear yourself. You haven't done it, sir! You try to bluster it through. There is something wrong in this business, and we shall find out what it is. Not another dollar will be paid out on your vouchers until our experts have gone through all the papers and examined every foot of the construction so far done. No, Wheeler, I will resign if you like. You asked me to join you. I was glad to do so. I considered it an honor and a duty, and I have made sacrifices for this trust. But if I stay on the board, this thing must be cleared up!"

Another high and angry voice answered this time: —

"You'd better not make loose charges, Mr. Pemberton, until you are in a position to prove what you say. I won't stand your talk; I don't propose to stay here and let you bully me — I'm going!"

Helen recognized her husband's voice, and she got to her feet, still clutching the chair. Then she stepped forward unsteadily toward the inner office. The handle of

the door moved a little, and against the glass panel the form of a man stood out sharply.

"What are you going to do about it? Sue Graves? Or sue me? You can discharge me if you like. But I am your agent and have full powers. Remember that! That's the way the contract is drawn. And if I back up Graves, what are you going to do about it? He's got your agent's signature for what he's done. . . . You'd better hold your temper and talk sense." . . .

"Don't threaten me, sir!" Pemberton retorted. "I have all the proof I want that you are a rascal, that you have entered into a conspiracy with this man Graves to swindle." . . .

There were sounds of a scuffle within the office, — the noise of falling chairs, the voices of excited men. Above all the clamor rose the cool tones of Wheeler: —

"Come, come, gentlemen! This is not business."

As he spoke, a weight fell against the door from the outside. The man nearest the outer office, who happened to be Judge Phillips, opened the door, and Helen fell, rather than walked, into the room, her face white, her hands stretched before her.

"Francis! Francis!" she called.

It was not her husband, however, who sprang to her aid. He was too startled to move. Wheeler, who was leaning against his desk with his hands in his pockets, leaped forward, caught her, and carried her from the room.

"Nell, Nell!" he muttered to himself. "Why did you come here!"

CHAPTER XXIII

Husband and wife did not speak while they were being driven across the city to their home. That which lay between them was too heavy to be touched upon at once in words. Several times the architect glanced fearfully at his wife. She rested limply on the carriage cushion, with closed eyes, and occasionally a convulsive tremor twitched her body. The summer heat, which had raged untempered for weeks, had already sapped her usual strength, and now her face had a bloodless pallor that made the man wince miserably. When the cab stopped at the North Side bridge, where a burly vessel was being pulled through the draw, Helen opened her eyes languidly; once or twice she sought her husband's face, which was turned blankly toward the crowded street. Her lips moved, and then she closed her eyes again. As they got out of the cab, a neighbor who was passing spoke to them and made a little joke, to which Jackson replied pleasantly, with perfect self-control. The woman leaning on his arm shivered, as if a fresh chill had seized her.

The children were spending the month in Wisconsin with Jackson's mother, and so the two sat down to a silent dinner. When the maid had come and gone for

the last time, Hart looked furtively across the table to his wife and said gently: —

"Won't you go upstairs, Nell? You don't look able to sit up."

She shook her head and tried to speak, but her voice was gone. Finally she whispered: —

"Francis, you must tell me all about it, — everything!"

He frowned and said nothing, until she repeated, "Everything, you *must* tell me!" and then he replied: —

"See here, Nell, you'd better drop this thing and not think of it again. That man Pemberton, who has pestered the life out of me all along, has made a row. He's an ill-tempered beast. That's all. And he'll repent it, too! He can't do anything to me. It's a business quarrel, and I don't want you to worry over it."

He was cool and assured, and spoke with the kindly authority of a husband.

"No, Francis!" She shook her head wearily. "That can't be all. I must know what it is — I must help you."

"You can't help me," he replied calmly. "I have told you enough. They can't do anything. I don't want to go any further into that business."

"I *must* know!" she cried.

He was startled at the new force in her voice, the sign of a will erecting itself with its own authority against him.

"Know what? What that fool Pemberton thinks of me? You heard enough of that, I guess."

"Don't put me off! Don't put me away from you, now, Francis! If we are to love each other, if we are to live together, I must know you, all of you. I am in a fog. There is something wrong all about me, and it gets between us and kills our love. I cannot — bear — it!"

Her voice broke into pleading, and ended in a sob. But controlling herself quickly, she added: —

"Mr. Pemberton is a fair man, a just man. But if he's wrong, I want to know that, too. I want to hate him for what he said to you."

"You would like to judge me, to judge your husband!" he retorted coldly. "That is not the way to love. I thought you would believe in me, all through to the end."

"So I shall — if you will tell me all the truth. I would go with you anywhere, to prison if need be, if you would be open with me."

"We needn't talk of going to prison yet awhile!" he exclaimed in exasperation.

He went to the sideboard, and pouring himself a glass of whiskey, set the decanter on the table.

"They can't do anything but talk," he repeated. Then, warmed by the liquor, he began to be more insolent, to speak defiantly.

"Pemberton's been after me from the start. He wanted Wright to get the work in the first place, and he's tried to put every obstacle he could in my way. It was first one thing and then another. He has made life unendurable with his prying and his suspicions. But I won't stand it another day. I'm going to Everett to-

morrow and tell him that I shall get out if Pemberton is to interfere with my orders. And they can't lay a finger on me, I tell you! Pemberton can just talk!"

Helen had put her head between her hands, and she was sobbing. Every hot word that he spoke drove conviction against him into her heart. At last she raised her tear-stained face and cried out with a new access of power: —

"Stop! Stop!"

Then she rose, took the decanter of whiskey, replaced it on the sideboard, and seated herself by his side, putting her hand on his arm.

"Francis, if you care for me, if you want us ever to love each other again, answer me honestly. Have you and that contractor done anything wrong about the school?"

"You can't understand," he replied roughly, drawing his arm from her touch. "You are making a great deal out of your own imagination."

"Answer me!" she said, in the same tense tone of pure will. "Have you let that man Graves cheat the trustees, — do anything dishonest, — and shut your eyes to it?"

"Pemberton claims he hasn't lived up to the specifications," the architect admitted sullenly.

"And you knew it?"

"So he says."

There was a moment's silence between them while the vision of this fraud filled their minds. She seemed to

hesitate before the evil thing that she had raised, and then she asked again, quickly: —

"Have you — did you make any money from it?"

He did not reply.

"Tell me, Francis!" she persisted. "Did this man give you anything for letting him — cheat the trustees? Tell me!"

He was cold and careless now. This new will in his wife, unexpected, so totally unlike her gentle, yielding nature, compelled him to reveal some part of the truth. In this last resort her will was the stronger. He said slowly: —

"If he got the school contract, there was an understanding that he was to give me some stock in a corporation. It was involved with other business."

"He was to give you stock?"

"Yes; stock in a hotel that he's been building — another piece of work."

"And he gave you this stock?"

"Some of it."

"What have you done with it?"

"Sold it."

"You have sold it?"

"Yes. It was a kind of bonus he gave me for getting him the contract and for doing the plans for the hotel, too."

Further than that admission he would not go, and they left the subject late at night. He was sullen and hard, and resented her new tone of authority to him; for he had always counted on her acquiescence and tenderness as his immutable rights.

In the morning this feeling of resentment was more firmly fixed. He regretted that in a moment of weakness he had admitted what he had the night before. When she came to him as he was preparing to leave the house, and, putting her hands on his arms, begged him to talk with her again before going to the office, he listened moodily and said that he was pressed for time.

"Won't you go to them, to the trustees, to Everett, anyway, and tell them everything you know? And give them that money — the money you got from the stock?"

"That's a woman's plan! That would make a nice mess, wouldn't it? I told you I got that as a bonus. I have worked a lot for this contractor, and he offered me this chance to make some money in one of his schemes. It's often done, something like that. You'd like to see me get into trouble — be disgraced for good and all?"

"That can make no difference now," she answered quietly. "The disgrace cannot be helped."

"What rot!" he sneered. "You make me out a thief at once. Suppose you look at what some of your acquaintances do, — the good, rich people in this town, — and find out how they make their money. Ask people how Silas Stewart gets his rebates from the railroads. Ask any one about the way Strauss grades his wheat."

"I don't want to know," she interrupted sadly. "That has nothing to do with this matter."

He left her impatiently. They did not reopen the sore that evening, nor the next day. Her face was set and stern, with a kind of dreary purpose in it, which made

him unhappy. He went out of the city on business, and did not return for several days. When he came home no mention was made of his absence, and for another week they lived silently. The night before the children were to return from their vacation with their grandmother, while husband and wife lay awake, each troubled by the common thought, she spoke again.

"Francis," she said firmly, "we can't go on like this. The boys are coming home to-morrow. They mustn't see us living this way. And it's bad for you, Francis, and I can't stand it! I have been thinking it over. I must go away with the boys. I shall go to uncle Powers's house in Vernon Falls."

"You are going to leave me and take the children with you because you think I am in trouble," he said accusingly.

"You know that isn't true. If you will only meet this trouble honorably, like the man I loved and married, I will stay, and be with you always, no matter what comes. Will you?"

"So you want to make conditions?"

"Just one."

"You had better go, then."

She turned her face to her pillow and wept in the dreary realization that she could touch him in no way. The next day she telephoned her mother to come to her, and when Mrs. Spellman arrived, she said quietly: —

"Mother, I am going to Vermont, to the farm. It may be for a long time. Will you come with me and the boys?"

Mrs. Spellman, who was a wise woman, took her daughter's face between her hands and kissed her.

"Of course," she answered simply.

That day they made the necessary preparations for themselves and the children. When the architect returned from his office and saw what was going forward, he said to his wife: —

"So you are determined to leave me?"

"Yes, I must go unless —"

"I have seen Everett. They aren't going to do anything. I told you it was all bluff on Pemberton's part."

She hesitated, uncertain what to think, and then she asked searchingly: —

"Why aren't they going to do anything? What does it mean?"

"Oh, I guess the others have brought Pemberton to his senses," he replied evasively. "At any rate, it's blown over, as I told you it would."

"No, Francis! It isn't made right yet. You would be different if it were. Somehow, from the beginning, when first there was talk of this school, it has all been wrong. I hate it! I hate it! And the trouble goes back of that, too. It starts from the very beginning, when we were married, and began to live together. We have always done as the others do all around us, and it is all wrong. I see it now. We can never go on again in the same way —"

"What way? I don't understand you in the least," he interrupted.

"Why, just earning and spending money, trying to get

more and more, trying to get things. It's spoiled your work; it's spoiled you; and I have been blind and weak to let us drift on like the others, getting and spending, struggling to get ahead, until it has come to this, to this, — something dreadful that you will not tell me, — something base that you have done to make money. Oh, how low and mean it is! How mean it makes men and women!"

"That's life," he retorted neatly.

"No, no, never! That wasn't what you and I thought before we married. I wish you were a clerk, a laborer, a farm-hand, — anything, so that we could be honest, and think of something besides making money. Let us begin again, from the very beginning, and live like the common people from day to day — live for your work, for the thing you do. Then we should be happy. Never this way, not if you make millions, millions!"

"Well, I can't see why you are set on going away," the architect answered, content to see her mind turn from the practical question.

"Tell me!" she exclaimed passionately. "Tell me! Is it all right with that building? With that contractor? Are you honest? Are you an honest man? Tell me, and I will believe you."

"I have said all that I am going to say about that matter," he answered stubbornly.

"Then, Francis, I go!"

The next afternoon the architect met his family at the train and saw them start, punctiliously doing all the little things that he could to make their journey comfort-

able. He referred to their going as a short vacation trip, and joked with the boys about the farm. Just before the train started, while Mrs. Spellman settled the children in their section, Helen walked up and down the platform with him. As the signal for starting was given she raised her veil, revealing the tears in her eyes, and leaning toward him kissed him. She put into his hands a little card, which she had been holding clasped in her palm. He raised his hat and stood on the platform until the long train had pulled out of the shed. Then he glanced at the card in his hand, which read: —

"I shall wait for you to come to me when you really want me. H."

He crushed the card in his fist and threw it into the roadbed.

Part III

INTO THE RANKS

CHAPTER XXIV

As the architect had said to his wife, nothing of a serious nature was to happen. In the end Everett Wheeler settled the matter. After the first gust of passion it was clear enough that the trustees could not have a scandal about the building. If the contractor were prosecuted, the architect, the donor's nephew, would be involved; and, besides, it was plain that Wheeler could not continue as trustee and assist in ruining his cousin. When it came to this point, Pemberton, not wishing to embarrass his associates, resigned.

Hart was to continue nominally as the architect for the school, but Trimble was to have actual charge of the building henceforth, with orders to complete the work as soon as possible according to the original specifications. At first Graves had blustered and threatened to sue if certain vouchers issued by Hart were not paid, but Wheeler "read the riot act" to him, and he emerged from the lawyer's office a subdued and fearful man. The calm lawyer had a long arm, which reached far into the city, and he frightened the contractor so thoroughly that he was content to be allowed to complete the contract. Whatever parts of his work had been done crookedly, he was to rectify as far as was possible, and Trimble was to

see that the construction which remained to be done came up to specification. As for the irrevocable, the bad work already accepted and paid for, the lawyer said nothing.

Thus the man of the world, the perfectly cynical lawyer, had his way, which was, on the whole, the least troublesome way for all concerned, and avoided scandal. He was the calm one of the men involved: it was his business to make arrangements with human weakness and frailty and "to avoid scandal." That at all costs!

He made his cousin no long reproaches.

"We've nipped your claws, young man," he admonished him.

He was disappointed in Jackson. Privately he considered him a dunderheaded ass, who had weakly given himself as a tool to the contractor. In his dealings with men, he had known many rascals, more than the public was aware were rascals, and he respected some of them. But they were the men, who, once having committed themselves to devious ways, used other men as their tools. For little, foolish rascals, who got befogged and "lost their nerve," he had only contempt.

"How's your wife?" he asked bruskly. "That was a dirty blow she got here the other day — straight between the eyes. I never thought she'd come in here that afternoon."

"Helen has gone East with the boys and her mother, —to that place in Vermont. She hasn't been feeling well lately, and she needs the rest."

"Oh, um, I see," the lawyer commented, comprehend-

ing quite well what this journey meant. He was a little surprised that Helen should desert her husband at this crisis. In his philosophy it was the part of a woman who had character to "back her husband," no matter what he might do, so long as he was faithful to his marriage oath. Jackson had been a fool, like so many men; there was trouble in the air, and she had run away. He would not have thought it of her.

Hart swallowed his humiliation before his cousin. He was much relieved at the outcome of the affair; it released him from further responsibility for the school, which had become hateful to him. He was chiefly concerned, now, lest the difficulty with the trustees should become known and hurt his reputation, especially lest the men in his office, to whom he was an autocrat and a genius, should suspect something. He began at once to push the work on the last details for the hotel, with the hope of forcing Graves to deliver another block of the "stock," which he argued was due him for his commission.

Now that the matter had been quietly adjusted without scandal, he was inclined to feel more aggrieved than ever over his wife's departure. "She might have waited to see how it turned out," he repeated to himself, obstinately refusing her the right to judge himself except where his acts affected her publicly. For some time he kept up with acquaintances the fiction of Helen's "visit in the East"; he even took a room at the Shoreham Club for the hunting season. But he soon fancied that the

people at the club were cool to him; fewer engagements came his way; no one referred to the great building, which had given him so much reputation; the men he had known best seemed embarrassed when he joined them,—men, too, who would not have winked an eye at a "big *coup*." The women soon ceased to ask about Helen; it was getting abroad that there was "something wrong with the Jackson Harts." For it had leaked, more or less, as such matters always will leak. One man drops a word to his neighbor, and the neighbor's wife pieces that to something she has heard or surmised.

So before the season was over Hart gave up his room at the club, where his raw self-consciousness was too often bruised. Then, finding his empty house in the city insupportable, he went to live with his mother in his uncle's old home. There was a lull in building at this time, due to the high prices of materials, but fortunately he could keep himself busy with the hotel and a large country house in the centre of the state, which often made an excuse for him to get away from the city.

Helen wrote to him from time to time, filling her letters with details about the boys. She suggested that they should return to the city to visit their grandmother during the Christmas holidays. She never referred to the situation between them, apparently considering that he had it in his power to end it when he would. He was minded often when he received these letters to write her sternly in reply, setting forth the wrong which in her obstinacy she was doing to herself and their children. He went over these imaginary letters in his

idle moments, working out their phrases with great care; they had a fine, dignified ring to them, the tolerant and condoning note. But when he tried to write he did not get very far with them. Sometimes he thought of writing simply, "I love you very much, Nell; I want you back; can you not forgive me?" But he knew well that he could not merely say, "I have done wrong, forgive me," if he would affect that new will in his wife, so gently stern. Even if he could bring himself to confess his dishonesty, that would not suffice. There was another and deeper gulf between them, one that he could not clearly fathom. "From the very beginning we have lived wrongly," she had cried that last time. "We can never go on again in the same way." . . . No, he was not ready to accept her judgment of him.

Thus the winter wore away, forlornly, and early in April the first hint of spring came into the dirty city. On a Sunday afternoon the architect went to call on his old friend, Mrs. Phillips, who was one of the few persons who gave him any comfort these days. He found her cutting the leaves of an art journal.

"There's an article here about that German — the one we are all trying to help, you know," she said, giving him a hand. "Yes, I have taken to patronizing the arts; it's pleasanter than charities. I have graduated from philanthropy. And you have to do something nowadays, if you want to keep up."

She spoke with her usual bluntness, and then added a little cant in a conventional tone: —

"And I think those of us who have the time and the position should do something to help these poor artists who are struggling here in this commercial city. People won't buy their pictures. . . . But what is the matter with you? You look as if you had come to the end of everything. I suppose it's the old story. That cold Puritan wife of yours has gone for good. It's no use pretending to me; I knew from the start how it would be."

"But I don't know whether she has gone for good," he muttered.

"You might as well make up your mind to it. Two people like you two can't get along together."

"It isn't that," he protested. "We have been very happy until lately."

"Well, don't mope, whatever you do. Either go and eat your humble pie, or arrange for a divorce. You can't go on this way much longer. Oh, I know all your troubles, of course. Hasn't that pleasant brother-in-law of mine been in here rehearsing that story about the school, — well, what do *you* call it? And he seems to hold me responsible for the mess, because I liked you, and gave you your first chance. I didn't corrupt you, did I?"

The architect moved uneasily. The widow's levity displeased him, and roused his anger afresh against the trustees.

"I don't know what rot Judge Phillips has been telling you, but —"

"Come," she interrupted him in his defence, "sit

down here by me and let me talk to you. You know me well enough to see that I don't care what the judge says. But I have something to say to *you*."

She made a place for him on the lounge, and tossed him a pillow to make him comfortable. Then, dropping her review on the floor, she locked her fingers behind her head and looked searchingly at the man.

"I don't know what you have been up to, and I don't care. Harrison always said I hadn't any moral sense, and I suppose I haven't of his sort. You should have had your uncle's money, or a good part at any rate, and it's natural that you should try to get all you can of it now, I say. But you must have been stupid to let that old square-toes Pemberton get in your way."

This cynical analysis of the situation was not precisely salve to the architect's wound. He was not ready to go as far as the woman lightly sketched. But he listened, for the sake of her sympathy, if for no other reason.

"Now, as I said, there's no use moping around here. Pick right up and get out for a few months. When you come back, people won't remember what was the matter. Or, if you still find it chilly, you can go to New York and start there. It's no use fighting things out and all that. Bury them."

She paused to give emphasis to her suggestion.

"Let your wife play by herself for a while; it will do her good. When she hears that you are in Europe, having a good time, she'll begin to see she's been silly. . . . I am going over, too. I've got to rent Forest Manor this summer. That Harris man went wrong the last time he

advised me, and got me into all sorts of trouble, — industrials. Venetia pensions me! She won't go abroad, but she kindly gives me what she thinks I ought to spend for the summer and advises me to go over. I sail on the *Kronprinz*, the 20th."

The invitation to him was implied in the pause that followed. The gleam in the man's eyes showed his interest in her suggestion, but he made no reply.

"There's nothing to do in your business just now, as you said, and you should give these talky people a chance to forget. We could have a good time over there. You might buy some things and sell them here, and make your expenses that way easily. You know all the nice little places, and if Maida and her husband come over, we could take an auto and do them. Think of Italy in May!"

She unclasped her hands and leaned forward, resting one arm on the cushioned back of the lounge, and thus revealing a very pretty forearm and wrist. Two little red spots of enthusiasm glowed in her cheeks. What life and vitality at forty-three! the man thought, smiling appreciatively into her face. For the first time she moved him emotionally. He was lonely, miserable, and thoroughly susceptible to such charm as she had.

"It would be awfully pleasant," he said at last, leaning toward her, "to get away from this place, with you!" . . .

His hand slipped to her beautiful arm. At that moment Venetia came into the room, unnoticed by the two on the lounge. She stood for a little while watching them,

and then, with a smile on her expressive lips, noiselessly withdrew.

"Well, wire for a passage to-morrow," Mrs. Phillips murmured. . . .

There was nothing more, nothing that would have offended the most scrupulous; for the architect, at least, was essentially healthy-minded. In a lonely moment he might satisfy the male need for sympathy by philandering with a pretty woman, who soothed his bruised egotism. But he did not have that kind of weakness — the woman weakness. A few minutes later he was leaving the room, saying as he looked into Louise Phillips's brown eyes: —

"Yes, I think you are right. I need to get away from this town for a while and rest my nerves."

"When you come back people will be only too glad to see you. They don't remember their scruples long."

"There isn't anything for them to worry over."

"The *Kronprinz*, then."

In the hall he met Venetia, who was slowly coming down the stairs, wrapped in a long cloak. She hesitated a moment, then continued to descend.

"Hello, Venetia!" Hart called out.

She swept down the remaining steps without replying, her eyes shining hotly. As she passed him, she turned and shot one word full in his face, — "Cad!"

CHAPTER XXV

The girl's word was like a blow in the face. It toppled over any self-complacency that had survived these last disintegrating months. Was he as mean a thing as that? So little that a girl whom he had always treated with jovial condescension might insult him, unprovoked? Probably others, all those people whose acquaintance he valued, had a like contempt for him, which they refrained, conventionally, from expressing. At first he did not resent their judgment; he was too much dazed.

In this plight he walked south on the avenue, without minding where he was going, and then turned west, automatically, at Twenty-second Street, walking until he came to the region of dance halls and flashy saloons. In this unfamiliar neighborhood there was a glare of light from the great electric signs which decorated the various places of resort, and the street was crowded with men and women, who loitered about the saloons and dance halls, enjoying the fitful mildness of the April evening. At this early hour there were more women than men on the street, and their dresses of garish spring colors, their loud, careless voices, and air of reckless ease, reminded the architect faintly, very

faintly, of the boulevards he had loved in his happy student years. In this spot of the broad American city coarse license flourished, and the one necessity for him who sought forgetfulness was the price of pleasure. The scene distracted his mind for the moment from the sting of the girl's contempt.

He entered one of the larger saloons on the corner of an avenue, and sat down at a small table. When the waiter darted to him, and, impudently leering across the table into his face, asked, "What's yours, gent?" he answered quickly: "Champagne! Bring me a bottle and ice." His heavy spirit craved the amber wine, which, in association at least, heartens man. At the tables all about him sat the women of the neighborhood, large-boned and heavy creatures, drinking beer by themselves, or taking champagne with stupid-looking rough men, probably buyers and sellers of stock at the Yards, which were not far away. The women had the blanched faces of country girls over whom the city has passed like the plates of a mighty roller. The men had the tan of the distant prairies, from which they had come with their stock. Their business over, the season's profit obtained, they had set themselves to deliberate debauch that should last for days, — as long as the "wad" held out and the brute lust in their bodies remained unquenched.

Presently the waiter returned with the heavy bottle and slopped some of the wine into a glass. The architect raised it and drank. It was execrable, sweetened stuff, but he drank the glass at a draught, and poured

another and drank it. The girl's inexplicable insult swept over him afresh in a wave of anger. He should find a way somehow to call her to account. . . .

"Say, mister, you don't want to drink all that wine by yourself, do you?"

A woman at the next table, who was sitting alone before an empty beer glass and smoking a cigarette, had spoken to him in a furtive voice.

"Come over, then," he answered, roughly pushing a chair to the table. "Here, waiter, bring another glass."

The woman slid, rather than walked, to the chair by his side, and drank the champagne like a parched animal. He ordered another bottle.

"Enjoying yourself?" she inquired politely, having satisfied her first thirst. "Been in the city long? I ain't seen you here at Dove's before."

He looked at her with languid curiosity. She recalled to him the memory of her Paris sisters, with whom he had shared many a *consommation* in those blessed days that he had almost forgotten. But she had none of the sparkle, the human charm, of her Latin sisters. She was a coarse vessel, and he wondered at the men who sought joy in her.

"Where do you come from?" he demanded.

"Out on the coast. San Diego's my home. But I was in Philadelphia last winter. I guess I shall go back to the East pretty soon. I don't like Chicago much — it's too rough out here to suit me."

She found Chicago inferior! He laughed with the humor of the idea. It was a joke he should like to share

with his respectable friends. They drank and talked while the evening sped, and he plied her with many questions in idle curiosity, touched with that interest in women of her class which most men have somewhere in the dregs of their natures. She chatted volubly, willing enough to pay for her entertainment.

As he listened to her, this creature of the swift instants, whose only perception was the moment's sensation, he grew philosophical. The other world, his proper world of care and painful forethought, faded from his vision. Here in Dove's place he was a thousand miles from the respectabilities in which he had his being. Here alone in the city one might forget them, and nothing mattered, — his troubles, his wife's judgment of him, the girl's contempt.

At last he had loosened that troublesome coil of things, which lately had weighed him down, and it seemed easy enough to cut himself free from it for good and walk the earth once more unhampered, like these, the flotsam of the city.

"Come! Let's go over to Grinsky's hall," the woman suggested, noticing the architect's silence, and seeing no immediate prospect of another bottle of wine. "We'll find something doing over there, sure."

But he was already tired of the woman; she offended his cultivated sensibilities. So he shook his head, paid for the wine, said good evening to her, and started to leave the place. She followed him, talking volubly, and when they reached the street she took his arm, clinging to him with all the weight of her dragging will.

"You don't want to go home yet," she coaxed. "You're a nice gentleman. Come in here to Grinsky's and give me a dance."

Her entreaties disgusted him. People on the street looked and smiled. At the bottom he was a thoroughly clean-minded American; he could not even coquette with debauch without shame and timidity. She and her class were nauseating to him, like evil-smelling rooms and foul sights. That was not his vice.

He paid for her admission to the dance-hall, dropped a dollar in her hand, and left her. Then where to go? How to pass the hours? He was at an utter loss what to do with himself, like all properly married, respectable men, when the domestic pattern of their lives is disturbed for any reason. So, vaguely, without purpose, he began to stroll east in the direction of the lake, taking off his hat to let the night wind cool his head. He found walking pleasant in the mild spring air, and when he came to the end of the street he turned south into a deserted avenue that was starred in the dark night by a line of arc lamps. It was a dull, respectable, middle-class district, quite unfamiliar to him, and he stared inquiringly at the monotonous blocks of brick houses and cheap apartment buildings. Here was the ugly, comfortable housing of the modern city, where lived a mass of good citizens, — clerks and small business men with their wives and children. He wondered vaguely if this was what his wife would have him come to, this dreary monotony of small homes, each one like its neighbor, where the two main facts of existence were shelter and food.

A wave of self-pity swept over him, and his thoughts returned to his old grievance: if Helen had stayed by him all would have been well. He wanted his children; he wanted his home, his wife, his neighbors, his little accustomed world of human relationships, — all as it had been before. And he blamed her for destroying his happiness, shutting his mind obstinately to any other consideration, unwilling to admit even to his secret self that his greed, his thirst for luxury, had aught to do with the case. He had striven with all his might, even as the bread winners in these houses strove daily, to get a point of vantage in the universal struggle. Doubtless these humble citizens had their modicum of content. But why should he, with his larger appetite, be condemned to their level? The idea was utterly repugnant to him, and gradually that heavy weight of depression, which the wine had temporarily lifted, pressed on his spirits.

He must have walked many blocks on this avenue between the monotonous small houses. In the distance beyond him, to the south, he saw a fiery glow on the soft heavens, which he took to be the nightly reflection from the great blast furnaces of the steel works in South Chicago. Presently as he emerged upon a populous cross street, the light seemed suddenly much nearer, and, unlike the soft effulgence from the blast furnaces, the red sky was streaked with black. On the corners of the street there was an unwonted excitement, — men gaping upward at the fiery cloud, then running eastward, in the direction of the lake. From the west there sounded

the harsh gong of a fire-engine, which was pounding rapidly down the car tracks. It came, rocking in a whirlwind of galloping horses and swaying men. The crowd on the street broke into a run, streaming along the sidewalks in the wake of the engine.

The architect woke from his dead thoughts and ran with the crowd. Two, three, four blocks, they sped toward the lake, which curves eastward at this point, and as he ran the street became strangely familiar to him. The crowd turned south along a broad avenue that led to the park. Some one cried: "There it is! It's the hotel!" A moment more, and the architect found himself at the corner of the park opposite the lofty building, out of whose upper stories broad billows of smoke, broken by tongues of flame, were pouring.

There, in the corner made by the boulevard and the park, where formerly was the weedy ruin, rose the great building, which Graves had finished late in the winter, and had turned over to the hotel company. Its eight stories towered loftily above the other houses and apartment buildings in the neighborhood. The countless windows along the broad front gleamed portentously with the reflection from the flames above. At the west corner, overlooking the park, above a steep ascent of jutting bay windows, there floated a light blue pennon, bearing a name in black letters, — THE GLENMORE.

At first the architect scarcely realized that this building which was burning was Graves's hotel, his hotel. The excitement of the scene stupefied him. Already the police had roped off the streets beneath the fire, in

which the crowd was thickening rapidly. From many points in the adjoining blocks came the shrill whistles of the throbbing engines, answering one another. The fire burned quietly aloft in the sky, while below there rose the clamor of excited men and screeching engines. The crowd grew denser every moment, and surged again and again nearer the building, packing solidly about the fire lines. Hart was borne along in the current.

"They've pulled the third alarm," one man said in his ear, chewing excitedly on a piece of gum. "There's more'n fifty in there yet!"

"They say the elevators are going still!" another one exclaimed.

"Where's the fire-escapes?"

"Must be on the rear or over by the alley. There ain't none this side, sure enough."

"Yes, they're in back," the architect said authoritatively.

He tried to think just where they were and where they opened in the building, but could not remember. A voice wailed dismally through a megaphone: —

"Look out, boys! Back!"

On the edge of the cornice appeared three little figures with a line of hose. At that height they looked like willing gnomes on the crust of a flaming world.

"Gee! Look at that roof! Look at it!"

The cry from the megaphone had come too late. Suddenly, without warning, the top of the hotel rose straight into the air, and from the sky above there

sounded a great report, like the detonation of a cannon at close range. The roof had blown up. For an instant darkness followed, as if the flame had been smothered, snuffed out. Then with a mighty roar the pent-up gases that had caused the explosion ignited and burst forth in a broad sheet of beautiful blue flame, covering the doomed building with a crown of fire.

Hart looked for the men with the hose. One had caught on the sloping roof of a line of bay windows, and clung there desperately seven stories above the ground.

"He's a goner!" some one near him groaned.

Large strips of burning tar paper began to float above the heads of the crowd, causing a stampede. In the rush, Hart got nearer the fire lines, more immediately in front of the hotel, which irresistibly drew him closer. Now he could hear the roar of the flame as it swept through the upper stories and streamed out into the dark night. The fierce light illumined the silk streamer, which still waved from the pole at the corner of the building, untouched by the explosion. Across the east wall, under the cornice, was painted the sign: THE GLENMORE FAMILY HOTEL; and beneath, in letters of boastful size, FIREPROOF BUILDING. Tongues of flame danced over the words.

The policeman at the line pointed derisively to the legend with his billy.

"Now ain't that fireproof!"

"Burns like rotten timber!" a man answered.

It was going frightfully fast! The flames were now

galloping through the upper stories, sweeping the lofty structure from end to end, and smoke had begun to pour from many points in the lower stories, showing that the fount of flame had its roots far down in the heart of the building. Vague reports circulated through the crowd: A hundred people or more were still in the hotel. All were out. Thirty were penned in the rear rooms of the sixth floor. One elevator was still running. It had been caught at the time of the explosion, etc. . . . For the moment the firemen were making their fight in the rear, and the north front was left in a splendid peace of silent flame and smoke — a spectacle for the crowd in the street.

Within the lofty structure, the architect realized vaguely, there was being enacted one of those modern tragedies which mock the pride and vanity of man. In that furnace human beings were fighting for their lives, or, penned in, cut off by the swift flames, were waiting in delirious fear for aid that was beyond the power of men to give them. A terrible horror clutched him. It was *his* building which was being eaten up like grass before the flame. He dodged beneath the fire line and began to run toward the east end, driven by a wild impulse that he could not control. He must do something, — must help! It was *his* building; he knew it from cornice to foundation; he might know how to get at those within! A policeman seized him roughly and thrust him back behind the line. He fought his way to the front again, while the dense crowd elbowed and cursed him. He lost his hat; his coat was half torn

from his shoulders. But he struggled frantically forward.

"You here, Hart! What are you after?"

Some one stretched out a detaining hand and drew him out of the press. It was Cook, his draughtsman. Cook was chewing gum, his jaws working nervously, grinding and biting viciously in his excitement. The fierce glare revealed the deep lines of the man's face.

"You can't get out that way. The street's packed solid!" Cook bellowed into his ear. "God alive, how fast it's going! That's your steel frame, tile partition, fireproof construction, is it? To hell with it!"

Suddenly he clutched the architect's arm again and shouted: —

"Where are the east-side fire-escapes? I can't see nothing up that wall, can you?"

The architect peered through the wreaths of smoke. There should have been an iron ladder between every two tiers of bay windows on this side of the building.

"They are all in back," he answered, remembering now that the contractor had cut out those on the east wall as a "disfigurement." "Let's get around to the rear," he shouted to the draughtsman, his anxiety whipping him once more.

After a time they managed to reach an alley at the southwest angle of the hotel, where two engines were pumping from a hydrant. Here they could see the reach of the south wall, up which stretched the spidery lines of a single fire-escape. Cook pointed to it in mute wonder and disgust.

"It's just a question if the beams will hold into the walls until they can get all the folks out," he shouted. "I heard that one elevator boy was still running his machine and taking 'em down. As long as the floors hold together, he can run his elevator. But don't talk to me about your fireproof hotels! Why, the bloody thing ain't been burning twenty minutes, and look at it!"

As he spoke there was a shrill whistle from the fire marshal, and then a wrenching, crashing, plunging noise, like the sound of an avalanche. The upper part of the east wall had gone, toppling outward into the alley like the side of a fragile box. In another moment followed a lesser crash. The upper floors had collapsed, slipping down into the inner gulf of the building. There was a time of silence and awful quiet; but almost immediately the blue flames, shot with orange, leaped upward once more. From the precipitous wall above, along the line of the fire-escape, came horrid human cries, and in the blinding smoke and flame appeared a dozen figures clinging here and there to the window frames like insects, as if the heat had driven them outward.

Cook swayed against the architect like a man with nausea.

"They're done for now, sure, all that ain't out. And I guess there ain't many out. It just slumped, just slumped," he repeated with a nervous quiver of the mouth. Suddenly he turned his pale face to the architect and glared into his eyes.

"Damn you, you — — — —! Damn you — you —" he stammered, shaking his fist at him. "There wasn't

any steel in the bloody box! It was rotten cheese. That's you, you, you!" He turned and ran toward the burning mass, distracted, shouting as he ran: "Rotten cheese! Just rotten cheese!"

But the architect still stood there in the alley, rooted in horror, stupefied. High above him, in a window of the south wall, which was still untouched by the fire, he saw a woman crouching on the narrow ledge of the brick sill. She clung with one hand to an awning rope and put the other before her eyes. He shouted something to her, but he could not hear the sound of his own voice. She swayed back and forth, and then as a swirl of flame shot up in the room behind her, she fell forward into the abyss of the night. . . . A boy's face appeared at one of the lower windows. He was trying to break the pane of heavy glass. Finally he smashed a hole with his fist and stood there, dazed, staring down into the alley; then he dropped backward into the room, and a jet of smoke poured from the vent he had made.

In front of the hotel there were fresh shouts; they were using the nets, now. The architect covered his face with his hands, and moaning to himself began to run, to flee from the horrible spot. But a cry arrested him, a wail of multitudinous voices, which rose above the throb of the engines, the crackle of the fire, all the tumult of the catastrophe. He looked up once more to the fire-eaten ruin. The lofty south wall, hitherto intact, had begun to waver along the east edge. It tottered, hung, then slid backward, shaking off the figures on the fire-escape as if they had been frozen flies. . . . He put his hands to his

eyes and ran. He could hear the crowd in the street groaning with rage and pity. As he ran he saw beside the park a line of ambulances and patrol wagons ready for their burdens.

How long he ran, or in what direction, he never knew. He had a dim memory of himself, sitting in some place with a bottle of whiskey before him. The liquor seemed to make no impression on his brain; his hand still shook with the paralysis of fear. He remembered his efforts to pour whiskey into the glass without spilling it. After a time a face, vaguely familiar, entered his nightmare, and the man, who carried a little black bag such as doctors use, sat down beside him and shouted at him: —

"What are you doing here? What do you want with that whiskey? Give it to me. You have had all the booze that's good for you, I guess."

And in his stupor he said to the man tearfully: —

"Don't take it away, doctor. For heaven's sake don't take the whiskey away! I tell you, I have killed people to-night. Eight, ten, forty — no, I killed eight people. Yes, eight men and women. I see 'em dying now. Give me the whiskey!"

"You're off your nut, man," the doctor replied impatiently. "You haven't killed any one. You have been boozing, and you'll kill yourself if you don't quit. Here, give me that!"

He remembered rising to his feet obediently and saying very solemnly: —

"Very well, my friend, I won't drink any more if you

say so. But listen to me. I killed a lot of people, eight of 'em, and I don't know how many more besides — over there in a great fire. I saw 'em dying, like flies, like flies! Now give me one more drink."

"All right, you killed 'em, if you say so."

"Don't leave me, doctor! It's a terrible thing to kill so many people, all at once, like flies, like flies!"

And he burst into tears, sobbing and shaking with the awful visions of his brain, his head buried in his arms.

CHAPTER XXVI

The next morning Hart found himself on a sofa in a bare, dusky room that looked as if it was a doctor's office. He sat up and tried to think what had happened to him overnight. Suddenly the picture of the burning hotel swept across his memory, and he groaned with a fresh sense of sharp pain. Some one was whistling in the next room, and presently the door opened, and Dr. Coburn appeared in trousers and undershirt, mopping his face with a towel. The architect recognized him now, and knew that he was the one who had struggled with him in his dreams.

"Hello, Jack Hart!" the doctor called out boisterously. "How are you feeling? Kind of dopey? My, but you were full of booze last night! I had to jam a hypodermic into you to keep you quiet, when I got you over here. Do you get that way often?"

"Was I drunk?" the architect asked dully.

"Well, I rather think. Don't you feel it this morning?"

He grinned at the dishevelled figure on the sofa and continued to mop his face.

"You were talking dotty, too, about killing folks. I thought maybe you might have a gun on you. But I couldn't find anything. What have you been doing?"

"It was the fire," Hart answered slowly, "a terrible fire. People were killed — I saw them. My God! it was awful!"

He buried his face in his hands and shuddered.

"Shook you up considerable, did it? Your nerves are off. Here, wait a minute! I'll fix you something."

The doctor went back into the inner room and returned presently with a small glass.

"Drink this. It will give you some nerve."

The architect took the stimulant and then lay down once more with his face to the wall. Before long he pulled himself together and drank a cup of coffee, which the doctor had prepared. Then he took himself off, saying that he must get to his office at once. He went away in a daze, barely thanking the doctor for his kindness. When he had left, Coburn began to whistle again, thinking, "There's something more'n drink or that fire the matter with *him!*"

Hart bought a newspaper at the first stand. It was swelled with pages of coarse cuts and "stories" of the "Glenmore Hotel Tragedy." On the elevated train, which he took to reach the city, all the passengers were buried in the voluminous sheets of their newspapers, avidly sucking in the details of the disaster. For a time he stared at the great cut on the first page of his paper, which purported to represent the scene at the fire when the south wall fell. But in its place he saw the sheer stretch of pitiless wall, the miserable figures on the iron ladder being swept into the flames. Then he read

the headlines of the account of the fire. Seventeen persons known to have been in the hotel were missing; the bodies of ten had been found. Had it not been for the heroism of a colored elevator boy, Morris by name, who ran his car up and down seven times through the burning shaft, the death list would have been far longer. On the second trip, so the account ran, the elevator had been caught by a broken gate on the third floor. Morris had coolly run his car back to the top, then opened the lever to full speed, and crashed his way triumphantly through the obstacle. It was one of those acts of unexpected intelligence, daring, and devotion to duty which bring tears to the eyes of thousands all over the land. The brave fellow had been caught in the collapse of the upper floors, and his body had not yet been found. It was buried under tons of brick and iron in the wrecked building.

The newspaper account wandered on, column after column, repeating itself again and again, confused, endlessly prolix, but in the waste of irrelevancy a few facts slowly emerged. The Glenmore, fortunately, had not been half full. It had been opened only six weeks before as a family hotel, — one of those shoddy places where flock young married people with the intention of avoiding the cares of children and the trials of housekeeping in modest homes; where there is music twice a week and dancing on Saturday evenings; where the lower windows are curtained by cheap lace bearing large monograms, and electric candles and carnations are provided for each table in the dining-room. Another year

from this time there would have been three or four hundred people in the burning tinder box.

The fire had started somewhere in the rear of the second floor, from defective electric wiring, it was supposed, and had shot up the rear elevator shaft, which had no pretence of fireproof protection. The east wall had bulged almost at once, pulling out the supports for the upper three floors. It was to be doubted whether the beams, bearing-walls, and main partitions were of fireproof materials. The charred remains of Georgia pine and northern spruce seemed to indicate that they were not. At any rate, the incredible rapidity with which the fire had spread and the dense smoke showed that the "fireproofing" was of the flimsiest description. And, to cap all, there was but one small fire-escape on the rear wall, difficult of access! "The Glenmore," so the Chicago *Thunderer* pronounced, "was nothing but an ornamental coffin."

Editorially, the *Thunderer* had already begun its denunciation of the building department for permitting a contractor to erect such an obvious "fire-trap," and for granting the lessees a license to open it as a hotel. There had been too many similar horrors of late, — the lodging-house on West Polk Street, where five persons had lost their lives, the private hospital on the North Side, where fourteen men and women had been burned, etc. In all these cases it was known that the building ordinances had been most flagrantly violated. There was the usual clamor for "investigation," for "locating the blame," and "bringing the real culprits before the Grand Jury." It

should be said that the *Thunderer* was opposed politically to the City Hall.

In the architect's office there was an air of subdued excitement. No work was in progress when Hart let himself into his private room from the hall. Instead, the men were poring over the broad sheets of the newspapers spread out on the tables. When he stepped into the draughting-room, they began awkwardly to fold up the papers and start their work. Cook, Hart noticed, was not there. The stenographer came in from the outer office and announced curtly: —

"The 'phone's been ringing every minute, Mr. Hart." She looked at the architect with mingled aloofness and curiosity. "They were mostly calls from the papers, and some of the reporters are in there now, waiting. What shall I say to 'em?"

"Say I am out of town," Hart ordered, giving the usual formula when reporters called at the office. Then he went back to his private room and shut the door. He dropped the bulky newspaper on the floor and tried to think what he should do. There were some memoranda on the desk of alterations which he was to make in a country house, and these he took up to examine. Soon his desk telephone rang, and when he put the receiver to his ear, Graves's familiar tones came whispering over the line. The contractor talked through the telephone in a subdued voice, as if he thought to escape eavesdropping at the central office by whispering.

"Is that you, Hart? Where have you been? I've

been trying to get you all the morning. Say, can't you come over here quick?"

"What do you want?" the architect demanded sharply. The sound of the man's voice irritated him.

"Well, I want a good many things," Graves replied coldly. "I guess we had better get together on this business pretty soon."

"You can find me over here the rest of the morning," Hart answered curtly.

There was a pause of several seconds, and then the contractor telephoned cautiously: —

"Say, I can't leave just now. That Dutchman's in here pretty drunk, and I don't want him to get loose. Come over, quick!"

"All right," the architect muttered dully, hanging up his telephone. He was minded to refuse, but he realized that it would be best to see what was the matter. Some plan of action must be decided upon. Meyer was one of the officers and directors of the Glenmore Hotel Corporation. The architect and a couple of clerks in the contractor's office were the other dummies in this corporation, which had been organized solely to create bonds and stock and to escape personal liability.

Hart gathered up the memoranda on his desk, and telling the stenographer that he was going out to Eversley to see the Dixon house, he left the office. As he stepped into the hall, he met Cook, who had just come from the elevator. He nodded to the draughtsman and hailed a descending car.

"Say, Hart," Cook said in a quiet voice, "can I have a word with you?"

Hart stepped back into the hall and waited to hear what the draughtsman had to say.

"I must have been pretty near crazed last night, I guess," Cook began, turning his face away from the architect, "and I said things I had no call to say."

"Come in," Hart murmured, unlocking the door to his private office.

"Of course, it wasn't my business, anyway," Cook continued, "to accuse you, no matter what happened. But I saw a friend of mine this morning, a man on the *Thunderer*, and he had just come from the city hall, where he'd been to examine the Glenmore plans. He says they're all right. Same as ours in the office. I can't understand what happened to the old thing unless Graves — Well, that's not our business."

There was a pause, while the two men stood and looked at each other. Finally Cook added: —

"So I wanted to tell you I was wrong, — I had no call to talk that way."

"That's all right, Cook," the architect replied slowly. Somehow the man's apology hurt him more than his curses. They still stood waiting. Suddenly Hart exclaimed: —

"You needn't apologize, man! The plans are all right. But that doesn't let me out. I knew what Graves was going to do with 'em. I knew it from the start."

"What do you say?" the draughtsman demanded, bewildered.

"The hotel was a job from the start," Hart repeated.

There was another pause, which was broken by Cook.

"Well, I suppose after this you won't want me any more?"

"I suppose not," the architect answered in a colorless tone.

"All right; I'll go to-day if you say so."

"As you please."

And they parted. Cook was an honest, whole-souled man. It was best that he should leave the office, Hart reflected, as he went down in the elevator — best for Cook and for him too. The draughtsman's admiration for him had been his daily incense, and it would be intolerable to see him daily with this matter between them, even if Cook would stay.

Hart found Graves in his inner office, while a clerk held at bay a roomful of men who wanted to get at the contractor. Graves looked serious, but undisturbed, manifesting no more outward emotion than if he had come from the funeral of a distant relative.

"It's a pretty bad mess, ain't it?" he said to the architect, offering him a cigar. "I guess you were right. Those first story walls weren't solid. They must have bulged and pulled the whole business down. . . . Of course the papers are hot. They always yap considerable when anything happens. They'll spit fire a week or so, and then forget all about it. Everything is straight over at the city hall so far. There'll be the coroner's inquest, of course. But he won't find much. The only danger is this cuss Meyer. He's been on a spree and is

pretty well shook up. If they get hold of him, and ask him questions at the inquest, he's liable to tell all he knows, and more too. What I want you to do is to take care of the Dutchman."

"What do you mean to do about the inquest?" Hart asked abruptly.

"Do? Well, the best thing for all of us who have been concerned with the Glenmore is to be called out of the city for two or three weeks or so. I have got to go to Philadelphia to-night or to-morrow, if I can get away. Gotz will be here to go on the stand if they want to get after the hotel corporation. They won't make much out of him. Now, if you can take care of the Dutchman—"

"What do you mean?"

Graves looked at the architect critically before answering.

"Don't lose your nerve, Hart. It'll come out all right. I've seen my lawyer this morning, and I know just what they can do with us, and it ain't much. They can get after the building department, but they're used to that. And they can bring a civil suit against the corporation, which will do no harm. You keep out of the way for a while, and you won't get hurt a particle. Take the Dutchman up to Milwaukee and drown him. Keep him drunk—he's two-thirds full now. Lucky he came here instead of blabbing to one of those newspaper fellers! Keep him drunk, and ship him up north on the lakes. By the time he finds his way back, his story won't be worth telling."

Hart looked at the big mass of a man before him,

and loathed him with all his being. He wanted to take him by one of his furry ears and shake the flesh from his bones. The same impulse that had prompted him to admit his guilt to Cook, the impulse to free his mind from the intolerable coil of fraud, cost what it might, was stirring again within him.

"Well?" Graves inquired.

"I am going to quit," the architect said, almost involuntarily. "I'm sick of the business, and I shan't run away. You can look after Meyer yourself—"

"Perhaps *you're* looking for some money, too?" the contractor sneered.

"No more of yours, I know that!" Hart answered, rising from his chair and taking his hat. "I'm sick of the whole dirty job, and if they want me to, I'll talk, too, I suppose."

"You damned, white-livered sneak! Ain't you got enough gut in you to sit tight? You—"

But the contractor was swearing at the blank wall of his office.

When the architect reached the street he hesitated. Instead of taking the train for Eversley, as he had intended to do, he got on an electric car that ran far out into the northern suburbs. He kept saying to himself that he wanted time to think, that he must think it all out before he returned to his office. For he was not yet sure that it would be best to stay and bear the brunt of the coming investigation, as he had said to the contractor. He was not clear whether that would do any good.

But he did not think. Instead, he brooded over the visions of the past night, which beset him. When the car stopped he got out and walked north along the lake shore, vaguely intending to reach Eversley in that way. He was still trying to think, but he saw nothing clearly — nothing but that terrible picture of the burning hotel, the dying men and women. Thus he walked on and on, still trying to think, to find himself. . . .

CHAPTER XXVII

. . . He had been lying there long hours close to the warm earth that was preparing for a new life. The thin branches of the trees rose bare and severe between him and the blue sky, mementos of the silent winter. The ground about their trunks was matted with dead leaves, through which nothing green had yet pushed its way. Nevertheless, the earth seemed yeasty with promise. The intense, unwonted heat of the April days had broken the crust of soil and set the sap of life in motion once more. The air was heavy with earthy odors, — a fragrant forecast of Nature's regeneration. Deep down in the little ravines, and among the pools of the meadowland beyond, frogs were croaking harshly, filling the solitude of the still slumbering woods with the clamor of awakening life. And through the brown tree trunks, above the tracery of the topmost branches, over the flat fields, there swam the haze of earliest spring — a vague atmosphere of renascence, the warm breath of mother earth.

The man lay there, empty of thought, feeling remotely the mighty movement of things around him — an inert mass in a vital world. The odors of the earth stirred in him faintly old sensations of vivid springtimes in his

youth, when the ecstasy of the great world of sun and sky and cloud, of distant fields and mounting uplands, had thrilled his heart. He saw again the morning mist swimming above the little Wisconsin lakes where he used to hunt, and felt the throb of joy for the on-coming spring. And he remembered how this outer world had spoken to him one day while he was sitting at his work in Paris. Something imperceptible had crept into the room over the endless roofs, and called to him in a low, persistent voice. Then he had listened, joyously putting aside his task, and obeyed the invitation, wandering idly forth into the germinating fields, which in some mysterious way had purified his soul of all petty things. In his youth that experience had come to him again and again, an impulse from beyond his world, which had led him forth from himself, from the soil of living, to fresh vigor and purity. Latterly there had come to him no call like this; he had known no abandonment of self in the enveloping force of Nature, no purification of spirit. The trees and the grass, the earth and the sky, all the multitudinous voices of unconscious life, had not spoken to him. Shut within himself, driven by the bitter furies of his own little being, he had worked from season to season, forgetting the face of Nature. True, he had lived the outdoor life of the world, passed through the beautiful fields each season, just as he had gone to the theatre or the opera. But the earth had not spoken to him, alone, personally, out of her abundant wisdom, garnered through the limitless years. For all the period of his maturity he had forgotten the great mother of life.

Now, wrecked and bruised, he lay there on her breast, as a sick man might lie in the silent room of a hospital and listen to the large commotion of life without. He was content to rest there on the warm earth, waiting and listening for the voice which should come from beyond, content to forget himself, — a creature that had been industriously shaped for eight busy years, a creature of the city and of men, with a self that was his in part only, and was mixed with all those others whom he had touched. That figure of deformity, made in the strife of the city, he no longer recognized to be his. The richer heart of youth, with its pictured hopes, the beauty of early days, came back to him and blessed him. . . . The sun sank into the deepening blue haze of the heavens; the thin shadows of the trees faded from the brown earth; the south wind from the prairies began to rise, blowing strongly, scented by the breeding land over which it had come. And as the day drew to its close, the murmuring voices of re-created life ascended from all parts of the earth with a strengthened note. The tree-toads were chorusing in the damp hollows, and the spice of roots and mould sucked out by the hot sun was descending once more in damp fragrance to the earth. The moist, crumbling soil beneath the man's body was opening itself — stirring, awakening, preparing, for the gigantic tasks of renewal, of re-creation, of conception and birth. An immense, powerful, impersonal life, the greatest Life of all, was going forward all about him. In the midst of this large mystery he felt that he was but an atom — an accident which counted for nothing.

That terrible vision of dying men and women no longer haunted the man's mind. The catastrophe which had shaken him to the roots of his being sank into its place behind the long procession of those acts, which had made him what he was. Now, at last, he began to think coherently, to see himself in the whole of his being, step by step, as he had come to be. The old man's death and funeral rose before him, and he remembered his restless preoccupation with the money so soon to be his, while others sorrowed and prayed. Then came the will, which he had resented, and the growing lust for the money that had slipped from his grasp. Born of that lust, bred in envy and hot desire, was the will to succeed. From the first day of his struggle for success there came before his eyes the man Graves. The contractor's fat, bearded face was the sordid image of his sin, familiar in its cupidinous look. It was the image of that greed to which he had submitted himself, with which he had consented to do evil. From the very hour when he had caught the contractor's eye in the Canostota, and the two had committed fraud over the weight of steel in an I-beam, there had set forth a long, long train of petty dishonesties, which had created in him the vitiating habit of insincerity. One by one he recalled the fraudulent works in which he had had a part, — the school from which he had tried to steal some of the money his uncle had denied him, and finally this hotel, which had crumbled at the touch of fire. That was the strange, dramatic climax of the story, fated so to be from the first petty lust for money, from the first fraud.

Greed, greed! The spirit of greed had eaten him through and through, the lust for money, the desire for the fat things of the world, the ambition to ride high among his fellows. In the world where he had lived this passion had a dignified name; it was called enterprise and ambition. But now he saw it for what it was, —greed and lust, nothing more. It was in the air of the city which he had breathed for eight years. . . . In his pride he had justified knavery by Success. He had judged himself mean and small merely because he had failed to cheat and steal and trick "in a large way." Only the little and the weak need be honest; to the strong all things were right — he had said glibly. Now, for the first day since the strength of his manhood, he saw acts, not blurred by his own passions, not shifting with the opinions of the day; but he saw them fixed and hard, — living, human acts, each one in its own integrity, with its own irrevocable fate; acts expressed in lowered eyelids of consent, in shrugs, in meaningful broken phrases; acts unprofessional, sharp, dishonest, criminal.

He lay in the gathering twilight, listened, and saw. And at last the soul of the man, which had been long in hiding, came back, and flowed into him once more. A deep, new longing filled his heart, a desire to be once again as he had been before, to rise from his debasement and become clean, to slough off this parasitic self into which he had grown all these years of his strife in the city, to be born anew like the springtime earth — such longings as come to men when they are sickened with the surfeit of their passions.

. . . He knew now why his wife had left him. She had felt the leper taint, which had been eating at his heart all the years of their marriage, and had repudiated it. She had cried out against the mere getting and spending of money, to which low ebb those lofty ambitions of his youth had descended before her eyes. She had loved him as the creator, the builder; and he had given her no visions, but only the sensualities of modern wealth. "Let us begin again and live the common life," she had cried out to him. "Let us live for work and not for money." He had put her aside with contempt, and refused to open the dark places of his life to her. Now he knew that she had done well to leave him to his own day of judgment. And the first impulse in the man's new soul was to go to her, humbly, and say to her: "You were right. I have sinned against myself, against you, against life, all along the way. Will you accept my repentance, and love me again from the beginning, knowing now the truth?" Ardently he desired to hear her answer; but his heart left him in doubt as to what that answer might be. For he understood at last that he had never known this woman, who had been his wife for eight years.

Nevertheless, despite this hunger of his heart for the woman he loved, there rose in him slowly a purging sense of relief from crime and sin committed. It had passed away, was put off from himself. Surely he was to come once more into peace! The upspringing life of the reincarnated earth chanted all about him but one song: "Here I leave my uncleanness. Life is strong and good. There is, for all, forgiveness and peace. Here I bury the filth

of my deeds, and renew my hope." Thus man rises again and again from the depths of his abasement; thus springs in him a new hope, a vital, imperishable element, the soul of his being; and he is prepared afresh for the struggle. Deep within him there lies forever the unconquerable conviction of his power to rise, to renew himself.

So, after the tempest of debauch, little men wake from their carnal desires, and, leaving behind them the uncleanness of their flesh, go forth into the pure morning, subdued and ashamed, yet irresistibly sure that life is good and holds forgiveness and hope for them. With the new day they will become like their dreams, clean and pure. Thus, also, those larger men, not eaten by bodily lusts, those greater sinners who are caught on the whirling spikes of bolder passions, who are torn and twisted — these, also, return at certain hours to the soul within them, and renew there the pure fire of their natures, so that they may enter again the endless contest having hope and health. Thus, above all, the great heart of things, the abundant mother of life, the earth, renews herself eternally according to the laws of her being, and comes forth afresh and undiminished for the business of living.

The mere lump of man lying there inert upon the ground felt this great process of renewal all about him, and sucked in fresh life and health. In like manner, years before, in his youth, he had gone down to the sea, and there had known something of this mysterious sensation of renewal. His body plunged in cool, black sea-water, he had drawn through the pores of

his flesh the elemental currents of life. He longed now to escape again from men, to go down to the sea and touch those waters washing in from their remote tidal courses up and down the earth. By such means Nature cleanses and teaches man. Heedless of man, unconcerned with his follies and vices, impersonal, irresistible, majestic, she receives his head upon her breast, and renews within him his spirit, — the power to battle, the power to live.

The fruitful earth holds in her bosom death and life, both together, and out of her comes health. In like manner there lie in the heart of man diverse instincts, — seeds of good and evil, ready to germinate. For long seasons seeds of one kind burst forth in the soil of a man's nature and thrive. Accident, the intricate web of fate, gives them their fit soil, their heat, their germinating impulse. And the world about them, seeing the fruit of these seeds alone, calls the man good or bad, and thus makes its rude analysis of character, as something set and fixed, stamped upon the soul forever. But in their own time other seeds, perchance ripening late and slowly, come to their day of germination, seeds of unlike nature, with diverse fruit. Such sprout and send their life forth into the man, creating a new nature which the world will not recognize as his. Thus it was happening with this man: commingled in his heart and brain there had lain diverse seeds of many kinds, — seeds of decay and seeds of life. Impulses of creative purpose, of unselfish work — these had been long dor-

mant; impulses of lust and greed and deceit — these had grown rankly in the feverish life of the city until they had flowered in crime. Now had come to him the time of fate; the first harvest of his acts was garnered; and the new seeds of his life were ready to wake from their sleep in the depths of his being, to put forth their energies, their demands. Some great shock — the agony of dying men and women — had quickened this new growth. So happened the miracle of rebirth, hidden far away from all human observation, first revealing itself in the consciousness of purification and renewed health.

The song of the springtime earth rose ever upward, calming and healing the man, who at last had caught its message. It said to him: "Another sun, a new day, an earth ever fresh from the hand of God! Eternal hope — the burial of the corrupt body with its misdeeds; health, and not decay; life, and not death. For life is good. There is forgiveness and renewal for all those who heed." . . . Through the misty heavens above the trees the stars glimmered faintly. Over the prairie, fields, and woodland the night wind passed, soft, odorous, charged with the breath of the earth in the conceiving time of life. . . .

Under the starlight of the spring night there might be seen the figure of a man walking southward toward the black horizon of the great city. He walked neither fast nor slow, but steadily, evenly, as if urged by one powerful purpose, — some magnetic end that set his nerves and his muscles to the rhythm of action.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The architect had a long time to wait in Wheeler's office that morning. The lawyer rarely came in before ten, so the stenographer said, looking suspiciously into the man's white, unshaven face. She knew Hart quite well, and she was wondering what was the matter with him — whether he was in trouble or had been on a spree overnight. He sat in one of the armchairs of the outer office provided for waiting clients, and, absorbed in his own thoughts, stared at the square of green carpet beneath his feet. When Wheeler finally entered, he threw a careless glance at the seated figure and said blankly: —

"Come in here!"

The lawyer opened the door to his little office, where he had confessed many a man, and without a word pointed to a chair beside his littered desk. Then he sat down and waited, examining the architect's face with his dispassionate eyes.

"Everett, I wanted to see you about something," Hart began. Then he stopped as though surprised by his own voice, which sounded far away, unfamiliar, and unused. The lawyer waited a moment for him to continue, and then he asked in his indifferent manner: —

"So you wanted to see me?"

"Yes, I want to tell you something," Jackson began again.

The lawyer wheeled toward his desk, and picked up a little silver letter-opener, which he fingered.

"About that fire?" he asked.

"Yes — that and other things."

Wheeler went to the door, closed it, and returning to his chair, wheeled his face away from his cousin.

"Well, what about it?"

"You know — you saw it in the papers — how the Glenmore burned? It was one of Graves's buildings, and I did the plans for him. Well, the newspapers were right; there was crooked work. The plans were all altered after they had been through the building department. Graves is in with the whole gang over there. He has all the inspectors in his pocket."

Then Hart paused again. He was not saying what he came there to tell. His mind seemed strangely unreliant and confused. While he stumbled, the frown on his cousin's face deepened into an ugly crease between the eyes. It said as plainly as words, "What in hell do you come here for, blabbing this to me?" Jackson, reading the look, caught himself and continued more steadily: —

"But I didn't come here to talk of the fire. It's about the school. Pemberton was right about that. It was crooked, too. I want to tell you what I know about that."

Wheeler put down the letter-opener and rested his chin on the tips of his fingers. The architect told his story slowly, without excitement, trying to give all the

details and the exact figures, busying himself with being precise. The matter was complicated, and it led him to speak again of the hotel and of other affairs, of his entire connection with the contractor, — to tell the complete story of his business career in the city. The lawyer did not try to stop him, although his face betrayed no special interest or desire to comment.

"Well, the upshot of the matter is," Hart ended, "that I am through with the whole business, Everett. I am going to get out of it somehow and square what I can. And first, I wanted you to know the truth about the school, and to take this for the trustees."

He laid on the desk a large, fat envelope, which he had filled that morning from his safety deposit box.

"There's about thirty thousand there, in stocks and bonds and some land. I thought I wouldn't wait to put it into cash," he explained. "It's pretty nearly all I have got, Everett. Part of that stock in the Glenmore which Graves gave me represented my legitimate commission on the building, but I have put that in, too. You can force Graves to make good the rest. I can figure out for you what he should pay. And I'll do what I can to help you make him do the right thing. If you can't get hold of Graves, why, I'm ready to give you my personal note for the rest and pay it as soon as I can."

Wheeler poked the envelope on the desk without taking it up.

"Conscience money?" he remarked slowly. "I don't want your wad. I wish you had chucked it in the

river, done anything with it but brought it here. I fixed that matter up once, didn't I?"

Hart was able to realize the contempt, the ironical humor, with which the lawyer's tone was charged, and his lips tightened. But he made no reply. After the experiences of the last two days he cared little for what his cousin might say or think. In some manner he had passed completely outside of the world where such matters counted. He was for the time dulled to all but a few considerations.

"Say," the lawyer iterated, "I thought we'd closed that little matter for good. But I can tell you there's one person who'll be tickled," he laughed disgustedly. "And that's old Pemberton. He thought you were a scamp from the word go. Now he'll be well set up when the judge tells him this. He'll take an irreligious pleasure in it."

Jackson said nothing, and the two men faced each other sombrely. Finally the lawyer exclaimed: —

"So you lost your nerve!"

It had not presented itself to the architect in that way, and he winced perceptibly as he replied: —

"Well, you can call it that. And I guess that if you had seen those people dropping into that burning building, and known what I knew about the way it was put together — Well, what's the use of talking! I am done with the whole thing — done with it for good."

The lawyer eyed him sharply, unsympathetically, curious, in a cold manner, of the psychology of the man before him. Hart's sturdy body, which was a trifle

inclined to fleshiness, seemed to have shrunken and to be loose in his clothes. The bones of his jaw came out heavily in his unshaven face, and below his eyes the skin was black, shading into gray. His tweed office suit was rumpled out of shape, and there were signs of the muddy roads on his trousers and boots. Usually so careful and tidy in dress, he seemed to have lost for once all consciousness of his appearance.

Wheeler had never felt much respect for his cousin as a young man. Then the lawyer considered him to be somewhat "light-weight," given to feminine interests in art and literature, feeling himself to be above his homely American environment. But since their uncle's death Jackson had won his approval by the practical ability he had shown in pushing his way in the Chicago world, in getting together a flourishing business, and making a success of his profession. Now that there was revealed to him the uncertain means by which this outward success had been obtained, he reverted easily to his earlier judgment. The man was really a light-weight, a weakling, he concluded. The lawyer despised weaklings; they made the real troubles in this life. He could not see to its depth the tragedy before him, even as the stern Pemberton might have seen it. He merely saw another nasty mess, a scandal that would probably get about the city, even if his cousin and the contractor escaped the Grand Jury for this Glenmore affair. He had little use for men who went wrong and "lost their nerve."

"Well," he said at last, "you needn't bother about

that note just yet. You'll have troubles enough for one while, I expect. I suppose I shall have to take this, though," — he tapped the fat envelope, — "and lay the matter before the trustees. I'll let you know what they decide to do."

"All right," Hart answered. As he did not rise immediately from his chair, the lawyer turned to his desk with an air of dismissal. When the architect at last got wearily to his feet, Wheeler asked, without looking up: —

"Have you seen that man Graves this morning?"

"No, I went to the bank and then came here the first thing."

"He was in here to see me late yesterday. He seemed afraid that you might split on him in this Glenmore business."

Hart listened, his eyes looking over his cousin's head far out through the office window, his mind concerned with other matters.

"Hadn't you better get out of the city for a few weeks?" the lawyer suggested casually. "Take a vacation. You seem to need a rest, bad. The papers'll quiet down after a while — they always do," he added explanatorily.

As a matter of fact, he had promised the contractor that he would do what he could to keep Hart from making any trouble. It was obviously best for the architect to be out of sight for the present, in some safe place where he could not be got at for awkward explanations.

"I've been thinking of going away for a few days,"

Jackson replied slowly, a flush spreading over his pallid face. "I'm going on to the Falls to see Helen. But I shan't hide, if that's what you mean. They can find me when they want me. And I shall be back before long, anyway."

Wheeler did not tell him that the coroner had already formed his jury, and that the first inquiry into the Glenmore fire was to begin the next day. If the architect had made up his mind to go to Vermont, it was just as well that he should get away before he could be summoned by the coroner.

"Well," he said, taking another look at his cousin, "whatever you do, get your nerve together. Men like you shouldn't play with fire. They'd better stick to the straight game."

The architect knew well enough what that meant. If he had been some cunning promoter who had had the wit to swindle the public out of any sum of money that ran into the millions, or if he had been some banker who had known how to ruin the credit of an enterprise which he wished to buy cheaply, Wheeler would have extended to him a cynical tolerance, and if his honesty were questioned, would have admitted merely that "there were stories about, of course — there always were stories when a man was smart enough to make some money quick." But, unfortunately, he belonged to the category of unsuccessful, petty criminals, and he "had lost his nerve."

He realized all this, and yet in the wreck which he had made of his life, he was indifferent to the world's injustice. What men thought or said about him had mar-

vellously little importance just now. This crisis had wonderfully simplified life for him; he saw a few things which must be done, and to these he was setting himself with a slow will. His face, as he gazed down at his cousin, held new, grave lines, which gave it a sort of manliness that it had not possessed before.

"You'd better see Graves before you leave, and get together on this thing," Wheeler concluded. "You won't do any good by making a bad matter worse and spreading the stink, you know."

"I can't see any use in talking with Graves," Jackson protested slowly. "I saw him yesterday and told him my views. He made me the treasurer of his company, and I was the architect for the building. If they get me up and ask me questions — why, I shall tell what I know about it. That's all there is to that."

"Well, we'll see about that when the time comes," the lawyer replied, and then asked bluntly: —

"Are you going to tell Helen the whole story, too?"

"Yes. That's why I'm going down there." The architect's face turned red with humiliation for the first time since he had begun his story.

"I suppose she'll have to know," Wheeler admitted softly. "It will cut her pretty deep."

He was wondering whether she could forgive this weak fellow, crawling back to her now, his courage gone, broken for life, as he judged. He suspected that she might pardon him even now, though she had left him inexplicably. She would forgive her husband when he was at the end of his rope; she was made that way. The

softness of character in such women irritated him, for the moment. There were other women whom he liked and admired less than her, — Mrs. Phillips was one, — who would not tolerate a flabby sinner like this man. But to Helen, disgrace would make little difference, perhaps would cause her to cling more closely to the dishonored man. And he was sorry for it all, because he loved the woman, and he could feel her tragedy, though he was impervious to the man's.

"Women have bum luck sometimes," he reflected aloud. "They have to take all the man's troubles as well as their own." Then he added not unkindly: "You had better think well what it means to her and to the children before you do anything to make matters worse. I'll keep an eye on what goes on here and let you know if you're needed — if you can do any good."

Neither offered to shake hands, and Hart went out of the office without replying to the last remark. In the vestibule of the building he hesitated a moment, as if to get his bearings, and then slowly walked down the crowded street in the direction of his office. The city sights were curiously foreign to him, as if he had come back to them after a long period of absence. The jostle of human beings on the pavement, the roar of the streets, were like the meaningless gyrations of a machine. With a repugnance that weighted his steps, he turned in at the door of his building and crowded into one of the cages that were swallowing and disgorging their human burdens in the mid-forenoon. In his office there had settled an air of listless idleness, now that Cook, the mainspring

of the place, was no longer at his post. Without looking at the accumulated mail on his desk, Hart called the stenographer and dictated to her some instructions for his partner, Stewart, who had just landed in New York on his way home from a vacation in Europe. The girl received his dictation with an offish, impertinent glance in her eyes that said, "Something's wrong with this place, I guess." When the architect had finished, she said: —

"Say, Graves was in here twice this morning and wanted me to let him know as soon as you came in. He wanted to know where you were. What shall I say to him?"

Hart thought a moment before replying. He did not wish to see the contractor, — that was very clear, — and yet he was unwilling to seem to run away, to avoid the man. Moreover, he realized vaguely since his talk with his cousin that there was a certain claim in complicity. There was trouble ahead for them both, surely, and Graves had his right to be considered.

"If Mr. Graves calls, bring him in here," he said to the stenographer, as he turned to his mail.

He had some final matters to attend to, and then he should take the train. If the contractor came back before he got away, he would see him. Half an hour later, while he was still tearing open his letters and jotting notes for the answers, his door opened and Graves walked in. He had less assurance than on the afternoon before; the strain of the situation was beginning to tell even on his coarse fibre.

"So you've come to!" he exclaimed with an attempt to be at his ease, taking a chair beside the desk.

"What do you want?" the architect demanded sharply.

"Say, did you see the papers this morning?" Graves asked, ignoring the question.

Hart shook his head; he had no curiosity to know what the newspapers were saying.

"They're making an awful kick, worse than I expected. It's mostly politics, of course. They've got the mayor on the run already. He's suspended the head of the department, and Bloom was a good friend of mine. That'll scare the rest considerable. And then there's talk of bringing civil suits against the hotel company and the officers individually."

He paused to see what impression this news might make on the architect.

"They can't get much out of me," Hart answered quietly. "I turned over to Wheeler pretty nearly every dollar I have got. That's on account of the school business," he added, thinking the contractor would not comprehend rightly his meaning. "It came out of the school and might as well go back to the trustees."

Graves stared at him in disgust. He had had some idea of forcing the architect to pay part of the expense of "keeping the City Hall quiet." Now the man had outwitted him and put his money beyond his reach.

"So you've seen Mr. Wheeler?"

"Just come from there."

"He told you he'd help us out of this hole?"

"We didn't discuss it."

"I've seen to Meyer myself. He's where he can't do no harm. And I guess it's all right over there," — he pointed with his thumb in the direction of the city hall, — "though it'll cost a sight of money if those fellers lose their jobs. Now, if we keep quiet, they can't do nothing but bring their suits for damages. I ain't afraid of that."

"I suppose not," Hart replied dryly. "It doesn't touch *you*. They're all straw names in the corporation papers but mine, aren't they?"

"Just now there's this damned coroner," Graves went on, ignoring the last remark. "The inquest begins tomorrow. He'll try to fix the blame, of course, and hold some one to the Grand Jury. He's got to, to quiet the papers."

"I suppose so," Hart assented wearily.

"But they've got nothing to go on if you only hold your tongue," Graves ripped out incautiously. "And you've got to hold your jaw!"

The man's dictatorial manner angered the architect. He rose hastily from his desk, gathering some papers and putting them into his bag.

"I told you yesterday, Graves, that I would have nothing more to do with you in this Glenmore business. I don't see what you came in here for. Let them go ahead and do what they can. I'll stand for my share of the trouble."

"You —" Graves burst out. "You —"

"I've got an engagement now, Mr. Graves, and

there's no use in our talking this matter over any more."

He reached for his coat and hat.

"But I tell you, Hart, that you can't be a quitter in this business. Didn't your cousin tell you that, too?"

"It makes no difference to me what he might say," Hart retorted doggedly, holding open the door into the hall.

"I'll smash you, sure thing, if you do me up in this dirty way!"

The contractor crossed the room to where Hart stood, as if he meant to strike then and there. Hart looked at him indifferently. The man disgusted and irritated him; he wondered how he could ever have submitted himself to him. He held the door open, and Graves passed out into the hall, which was empty.

"I'll smash you!" he repeated, less loudly.

"All right!" the architect muttered. "I guess that won't matter much now."

Graves kept by his side in the elevator, and followed him out into the street.

"Say! Step over to Burke's place with me," he urged in a more conciliatory tone.

"See here!" the architect answered, stopping on the sidewalk. "It's no use talking, Graves, I've done with you and your methods. Can't you see that? I don't intend to get you into trouble if I can help it. But I don't mean to sneak out of this or tell any lies to save your hide. I'm on my way out of the city now, to see my family, and shall be away for a few days. Wheeler

knows where I shall be, and he'll let me know when I am wanted. They won't get around to me for some little time yet, probably. If they summon me, why, I suppose I shall come back."

The contractor, hearing that Hart was about to leave the city, felt relieved for the moment. It would be easier to deal with his cousin, the lawyer, who might be able to keep the architect from making a fool of himself. So he walked on with Hart toward the station in a calmer frame of mind. As if he realized the mistake he had made in trying to bully his accomplice, he began to put forward his personal difficulties apologetically.

"This fire has hit me hard. Of course the Glenmore will be a dead loss, and the banks have begun to call my loans. Then it'll take a lot of ready money to keep those fellers over there quiet, in case the Grand Jury takes a hand. I was just getting where I couldn't be touched when this fire came, and now I shall have to begin over pretty nearly. You don't know, Hart, what hard sledding it's been to build up my business with nothing back of me to start on."

The architect realized that Graves was making an appeal to his sympathies, and although the wheedling tone, so unlike the man's usual blustering self-confidence, roused his contempt, he began to see more dispassionately the contractor's point of view. The man was fighting for his life, and there could be nothing reasonable to him in a determination to make a bad matter worse. For no amount of truth now could save those hapless victims of greed who had lost their lives in the wretched building.

"I don't want to ruin my family no more than you do, Mr. Hart," the contractor persisted. "And you can't make me so much trouble as you will yourself. You can see that," he added meaningly.

Hart turned on the man angrily: —

"I have heard about enough, Graves! It's no use your going on. I tell you I mean to come back and stand my share of the trouble — yes — if it breaks me! Do you hear? If it breaks me! Now good day."

The contractor turned away, scowling like a dog that had been kicked into the street. Hart hurried into the station and bought his ticket. He had not looked up his eastern connections, remembering merely that Helen had left Chicago by this road, and he took the first train east in his overwhelming desire to get to her, to tell her all, to submit. And already, as the heavy train moved slowly out of the station, he felt strangely relieved from the perplexities of the morning. The unconscious physical influence of mere motion, of going somewhere, soothed his irritated nerves.

He had been goaded into his final declaration to the contractor, for he had felt the ground slipping from his resolution under the persistent appeals of the man. As the train shot out into the prairie, however, he turned the matter over in his mind again and again, trying to consider it in all its varying aspects. After all, was it necessary that he should come back as he had said in his first singleness of resolution and bring on himself and his family the shame and disgrace of public exposure? He comforted himself with the thought that he had the

courage to tell his story, that in leaving the city he was not merely running away to escape the consequences of his connivance with fraud. Yes, he could go back — if it were necessary; but for the time being he put the question out of his mind. While the train moved across the states, his heart grew calmer, stronger; whatever might be the outcome, he knew that his instinct had been right — that he had done well to go first to his wife. Then, whatever might seem best, he could bring himself somehow to do it.

CHAPTER XXIX

The old Jackson homestead at Vernon Falls was a high, narrow, colonial house with three gables. Upon the broad terrace facing the south side there was a row of graceful, "wineglass" elms. Below the terrace stretched a broad, level meadow, which was marked irregularly by a dark line where a little brook wandered, and beyond the meadow passed the white road to Verulam, the nearest station. From this highway a lane led through copses of alder and birch along the east side of the meadow to the old house, which was withdrawn nearly an eighth of a mile from the public road.

It was an austere, silent, lonely place. Powers Jackson, during the last years of his life, had built a great barn and sheds behind the house with the purpose of making a stock farm, but since his death these had been shut up. He had also built along the terrace a broad veranda, which contrasted strangely with the weather-beaten, hand-made clapboards of the old building. The gaunt, lofty house seemed to be drawing itself away disdainfully from this frivolous addition at its base.

Jackson had often spent his long vacations at the farm with his mother when he was at college. Yet that April afternoon, when he came upon it from the bend in the

Verulam road, it seemed to him singularly unreal. His memories of the house and the meadow in front of it had grown and flowered, until in his imagination it had become a spot of tender, aristocratic grace, a harmony of swaying elm branches and turfy lawn, lichened stone walls and marvellous gray clapboards. To-day it rose bare and severe across the brown meadow, unrelieved by the leafless branches of the elms that crisscrossed the south front. The slanting sun struck the little panes of the upper windows, and made them blaze with a mysterious, intensely yellow fire. Involuntarily his pace slackened as he turned from the highroad into the lane. The place appeared strangely silent, deserted. Was Helen there in the old house? Could she understand? Could she forgive him? . . .

The northern spring had barely begun. It was cold, grudging, tentative, scarcely touching the brown meadow with faint green. Hiding its charm, like the delicate first bloom of Puritan women, it gave an uncertain promise of future performance — of a hidden, reticent beauty.

Jackson lingered in the lane, watching the sun fade from the window panes, until the air suddenly became chill and the scene was blank. Then, as he stepped on toward the house, he caught sight of a woman's figure stooping in the thicket beside the road. His heart began suddenly to beat, telling him, almost before his eyes had recognized the bent figure, that this was his wife. She looked up at last, and seeing him coming toward her, rose and stood there, her hands filled with the tendrils of

some plant that she had been plucking up by its roots, her face troubled and disturbed.

"Nell!" he called as he came nearer, "Nell!"

And then he stopped, baffled. For long hours on the train he had thought what he should say when he met her, but now his premeditated words seemed to him futile. He saw the gulf that might lie between them forever, and he looked hesitatingly into her troubled face. She was wonderfully, newly beautiful. Her hair was parted in the middle and rippled loosely over the temples to the ears, in the way she had worn it as a girl, a fashion which he had laughed her out of. She had grown larger, ampler, these last months, and in her linen dress, with its flat collar revealing the white neck, without ornament of any sort, her features came out strong and distinct. That curve of the upper lip, which had always made the face appealing, no longer trembled at the touch of emotion. There was a repression and mature self-command about her, as if, having been driven back upon her own heart, she had recovered possession of herself once more, and no longer belonged to a man. She was beautiful, wholly woman, and yet to her husband waiting there she seemed to be his no longer.

"Nell," he began once more, still standing at a little distance from her, "I have come here to you, as you said."

Her arms hung limply at her sides, with the trailing plant drooping across her skirt, as though, thus taken by surprise, she were waiting for him to declare himself. He stepped nearer quickly, his heart sick with the fear

that, after all, it was too late, that she had passed beyond his reach.

"You know what I mean! I have come to tell you that you were right when you went away. You were right all along, and I have been wrong."

But as he spoke she reached out her arms to him, beseeching him, drawing him to her, in commiseration for him. She put her arms on his shoulders, clasping them behind his neck, thus drawing him and holding him from her at the same time. Her lips trembled, and her breath fluttered as she looked into his eyes. . . .

"Francis! Francis!" she murmured, holding him a little from her when he tried to take her in his arms. . . .

And in her eyes and trembling mouth he knew that she could forgive him; but he felt strangely humble and little beside her. He saw himself in her eyes as he had never seen himself before. Slowly she drew him to her and kissed his lips, tenderly, unpassionately.

"The boys are over there by the brook," she said, nodding across the meadow.

They sat down on the crumbling stone wall to wait for them, and presently, catching sight of their father, they came tumbling over the wall with cries of "Dad, it's dad—he's come!" and together they all went on to the house.

Mrs. Spellman received her son-in-law in her equable, unknowing manner, as if she had expected him to arrive on that day. After supper she took the boys to their room while husband and wife sat in the west parlor,

which the architect remembered just as it was this day, with the same faded drab carpet, the brass fire-irons, and worn furniture. The high-backed walnut writing-table stood in its familiar corner beside the window. Outside, a drooping elm branch swept softly across the glass pane. Nothing here was altered, nothing added, save the new lives of the modern generation. They watched the leaping flames lick the fire-eaten bricks of the old fireplace for a time, and then he turned to her with a sigh: —

"Now I must tell you the whole story, Nell."

"Yes," she answered, letting her hand fall softly on his arm. "Tell me everything."

And he began slowly to tell her the story as he had lived through it that night when he lay exhausted on the earth beneath the stars — the story of his work in the city, of the acts which for eight years he had hidden from all, even himself. He explained as well as he could the tangled web of his dealings with the contractor from the day when he had met him in the Canostota until the time of the arrangement over the school and the hotel. When he came to the end, to the horrible fire which had licked up the fraudulent Glenmore before his own eyes, hot tears fell upon his hands, which his wife held tightly in hers, and he could feel her body tremble against his.

"And that was the end! It made me see in one flash what it all meant. Of course, those men and women might have been caught anyway, no matter how well the building was put up, — there's no telling, — and Graves would have done the same job whether I had been in with him or not. Still, that doesn't count. When I saw

them there, trapped, fighting helplessly for their lives, I felt as if I had stood by and let them be murdered — and made money by it, too!"

The horror of those minutes revived as he went over the story, and he paused wearily.

"Somehow," he resumed, "it was all of a piece — dirty work. Everything I had touched, pretty nearly, since I had started seemed rotten. It made me sick all over. . . . Well, that was the end. I went to Everett and tried to square the school matter as well as I could. I gave him all I had made out of it and more, — about every dollar I had. It leaves us where we started. But, Nell, I knew you would want me to do that first before I came here."

It seemed a pitifully trivial act, now that he had told it, yet he was glad that he could give her this proof of his sincerity. She said nothing, but she raised her eyes, still filled with tears, to his face with a calm, answering look.

"It's a bad story, as bad as it could well be," he resumed. "I see it clearly enough now. I wanted uncle's money, wanted the easy time, and the good things, and all that. Then when I didn't get it, I went in to make a big success and have the things I was after, anyhow. I saw men out there no more able than I who were making a lot of money, and nothing seemed to count so long as somehow you made good. I wanted to make good. It was a pretty cheap ambition."

"Yes!" she exclaimed fervently, "cheap! Oh, so cheap!"

Nevertheless she did not despise him as she might

have despised him at the time of their marriage for his sordid soul. During these eight months that she had lived by herself she had come to see more justly the causes of things — she had grown wiser. She held him now less rigidly, less remorselessly, to her own ideal of life. For she had begun to understand that the poison which had eaten him was in the air he had breathed; it was the spirit of the city where he worked, of the country, of the day — the spirit of greed. It presented itself to men in the struggle for existence at every turn of the road, insidiously and honorably disguised as ambition and courage. She saw the man's temptation to strive with his competitors, as they strove for the things which they held desirable. And she had come to realize that to stand firmly against this current of the day demanded a heat of nature, a character that the man she had married and worshipped, had never possessed. He was of his time neither better nor worse than his fellows, with their appetite for pleasure, their pride — that ancient childish pride of man in the consideration and envy of his kind. . . .

"So you have it all, and it's bad enough, God knows. Nell, can you ever really forgive it, forget it, and love me again?"

For answer she leaned toward him and kissed him, understandingly. Now that her heart knew him utterly, with all his cowardice and common failings, she might still love him, even foreseeing the faltering and unideal way of his steps, giving him, like many women, her second love, the love that protects in place of the love

that adores. And with that kiss there began for her a new marriage with the man she had seen large in her dreams, the man who had been her hero. . . .

The elms swayed softly in the night wind, brushing across the window by their side. The old house was very still with the subdued calm of age, and man and wife sat there together, without words, looking far beyond them toward the future that was to be theirs.

CHAPTER XXX

The next day and the next went by in the peace of the old house. Now that the event which had so wholly occupied the man's mind since the night when the Glenmore burned had come about; now that he was here in the old place, and had his wife and children once more, he began to consider personally the wreck of his affairs which had been left behind in Chicago. And he began to ask himself whether, after all, it was necessary for him to return to the city and make public his shame at the hearing before the coroner. He was not clear what service to justice or to the dead who had been sacrificed, as much through the corruption of civic government as by his own wrong-doing, his testimony would accomplish. That it would surely ruin him professionally was beyond the shadow of a doubt. He could picture to himself well enough the ferocious glee with which the *Thunderer* would receive his evidence! Was it necessary to give his wife and his children into the merciless hands of the malicious newspapers?

The evening mail of the second day brought a letter from Wheeler. The coroner's inquest, the lawyer wrote, was likely to drag on for a week or more. The coroner was a Republican, and "had it in for the city administra-

tion." He was trying, also, to make all the personal and political capital that he could out of the affair. At present, as Jackson could see from the newspapers, they were engaged in examining minor witnesses, — the servants and employees of the Glenmore, the police and the firemen, — trying to account for the origin of the fire. So the architect could be of no use now, at any rate, and had better stay quietly where he was until the matter took more definite shape. As far as the coroner's inquest was concerned, it was a public farce, — trial by newspaper, — and it would be well to wait and see whether the affair was to reach a responsible court. In the meantime it was understood that he was ill at his summer home. Graves, so Wheeler added, had been in to see him again before he left the city. It was foolish to irritate the contractor and make the matter worse than it was already, etc.

Then Hart opened the bundle of newspapers, and glanced through their padded pages. His eye was caught immediately by an editorial caption: —

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE GLENMORE TRAGEDY?

The article was a sarcastic summary of the results thus far from the inquest, done in the *Thunderer's* best manner. So far, the editorial writer pointed out, the inquiry had been confined to examining chambermaids, bell-boys, and the police, and to quarrelling about the exact location of the fire when it started. The *Thunderer* hoped that before closing the inquest the coroner would

have the courage to go higher, and to probe the building department, and to ascertain what Mr. Bloom's connection with the matter was, and whether his inspectors had ever made a report on the Glenmore. Further, the coroner might to advantage summon the officers of the hotel company, who had erected this fire-trap, and the architect whose plans for a fire-proof structure had been so lamentably inadequate. The *Thunderer* understood that the Glenmore Hotel Corporation was one of those paper corporations, officered by clerks, behind which unscrupulous capitalists so often shielded themselves. Of the officers whose names appeared in the papers of incorporation, three were clerks in the employ of a contractor named Graves, who had built the hotel, and a fourth was a prominent young architect, who had prepared the plans for the building. The people of Chicago wanted to hear what these men had to say about the Glenmore hotel, especially *Bloom*, *Graves*, and *Hart*. "Look higher, Mr. Coroner!" the *Thunderer* concluded solemnly.

When Helen came into the room a little later, she found her husband plunged in thought, the sheets of the newspaper scattered about him.

"What is it?" she asked quickly.

He picked up the paper and handed it to her. She read the article in the *Thunderer*, her brow wrinkling in puzzle as she went on. When she had finished it, she let it fall from her hands, and looked at her husband inquiringly.

"They want you to go out there and tell about the building of the hotel?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered dully. "I knew it would come sooner or later. You see I was not only the architect, but Graves made me the treasurer of the corporation. I was only a dummy like the others," he explained. "The corporation was just Graves! But I told Everett that I should go back and tell what I knew. Only he doesn't think it necessary, now!"

"What would happen? What does it all mean?"

He explained to her what the legal results might be in case the coroner's jury held him and others to the Grand Jury, as criminally liable for the disaster. Then, if the Grand Jury found a true bill against him, whenever he returned to Chicago he could be tried for manslaughter. But even if in his absence he should be held to the Grand Jury, there were many steps in the complex machinery of legal justice, and he could probably escape without trial. Evidently Wheeler, who knew the involutions of the district attorney's office, was counting on the probability that no one would be brought to trial in this hotel case, — that the disaster would be buried in that gulf of abortive justice where crimes against the people at large are smothered.

"And in that case," Hart concluded, "there would be no use in letting them tear me to pieces in the papers!"

"But you must go back!" she exclaimed, brushing aside his reasoning. "You must tell them all you know!"

"Everett doesn't think so," he protested, "and I can't

see the good of it, either. They won't do anything, probably. It's just politics, the whole investigation. But the newspapers are full of it just now, and they would hound me to a finish. It would be impossible for me to get work in Chicago for a long time, if ever again. And it would cover you and the boys with disgrace — that's the worst! I have paid enough!"

"But it must be done," she repeated in a low voice.

She was not clear what good might come of his testimony: she was ignorant of the legal conditions. But she had a fundamental sense of justice: men must pay for the evil they do, — pay fully and pay publicly. A private repentance and a private penance were to her incomplete and trivial.

"I've got to earn our living," he urged. "You must think of that! If I am shut out of Chicago, we must begin somewhere else at the bottom."

She was not ready yet to consider that question.

"You mustn't think of us," she answered. "Francis, you can't really pay for all the wrong that has been done. But perhaps the truth will do some good. And unless you are ready to face the open disgrace, — why, you have done nothing! The money you gave back to the trustees was nothing. This is the only way!"

It was the only way for him, at least. With his buoyant, pliant nature, as she understood it, some final act, definite, done in the eyes of the world that knew him, was needed to strengthen the fibre of his being, to record in his own soul its best resolve. For already he had begun to waver, to quibble with his repentance.

He had been ready enough in the stress of his first feeling after the catastrophe to stand before the world and confess his share in the wrong that had been done. Then he was eager to free his mind of its intolerable burden. But now that the excitement had faded, leaving him to face the difficulties of his future, he saw in all its fatal detail what public disgrace would mean, and he drew back. It was folly to invite ruin!

Yet in the end the woman held him to her ideal. Late that night he consented to telegraph Wheeler of his immediate return, and to take the first train on the morrow for the west, there to await the coroner's summons.

"I shall go on with you, of course," she said. "We will all go, — the boys, too. Mamma will stay and close the house. Perhaps you can't get away very soon after it is over. And I want to be there with you," she answered to all his objections.

"You know what it will mean!" he exclaimed warningly, as the last log burst into ashes on the hearth. "Nell, it's worst for you and the boys. It means ruin, nothing less!"

"Never!" she protested with flashing eyes. "Other people, the newspapers, can't make ruin. Ruin is in ourselves. It merely means that we shall have to do without friends, and society, and things, especially things. And I have come to hate things. They make one small and mean. I never thought we should have them, when we were married. And I don't want them for the boys, either. There is work! the best thing in life, — work for itself, without pay in things, without bribes! We'll have that and bread, Francis!"

"But the public disgrace," he objected, still sensitive to the opinion of the world in which he had lived.

"Better even that than the disgrace between us," she whispered. "No, no! There is no other way."

At least there was no other way to her love, and that love he could not live without, cost him what it might.

"You are strong, Nell!" he confessed his admiration.

"And you, too!" she whispered back, her face illumined with the courage of her nature.

Little Powers, the younger boy, had not been well, and the next morning, when he was no better, Jackson urged that it would be unwise to take him, that he had best go back alone. But Helen would not consent, knowing that he made the most of the child's illness to spare her the trial which was to come.

"It is nothing," she said. "Mother thinks it will do no harm to take him. And if he is going to be really sick, it would be better for us to be there in the city than here."

So they drove over to Verulam and took the train. After the boys had been put to bed for the night, Helen came back to the section where the architect was sitting, looking dully into the blank fields.

"What do you think of this?" she exclaimed, putting a letter into his hands. "I got it just as we were leaving. It's from Venetia, — read it!"

He took the thick envelope from her hands, remembering suddenly the girl as he had last seen her, when she had summed him up in one bitter, opprobrious word.

The sting of that word had gone, however, effaced by the experience which he had suffered since, and he opened the letter listlessly.

My dear Mother Superior, — Do you recognize the Forest Park postmark? I am not going abroad after all. At least not just yet. Mother's gone, sails this week with Mrs. Ollie B. Now listen, and I'll make your hair stand on end.

First, mother! She's had a grievous disappointment lately. Colonel Raymond, — you know him of course, — the little gray-whiskered railroad man, mother's pet indulgence for I can't say how long, — has at last been freed from the legal attachment of one wife and is about to take another at once. Whom do you think? The youngest Stewart girl! ! ! The wedding is for the 3d of June. We are not going, naturally. Of course, it was a crushing blow to poor mamma, — she put her sailing forward a whole week to escape from her friends. She was positively growing old under it.

I know you don't like this, so I cut it very short. Now, prepare! I am going to embrace the serious life, at last, — I mean matrimony. Really and truly, this time. You know the man, but you'd never guess: he's *our* doctor. Dr. Coburn. Yes! Yes! ! Yes! ! !

Mother threw a fit when I told her, and then, of course, I knew I was quite right. We are to be married any time, when he finishes up the work he has on hand, so that he can give me some attention. We might look in on you in your convent retirement, if sufficiently urged. Then I'll

tell you all about it, and make him show you all the little tricks I have taught him. Mamma still calls him "that fellow," but he's by way of being a very distinguished man on account of some bug he's discovered. The medical journals are taking off their hats to him. I read the notices, — don't you believe I am fast enough in love?

Well, I have had to send mamma abroad to recover her nerves, and I am out here putting the place in order as it is to be rented to some awful people, whom you never heard of. By the way, the doctor isn't going to let me use my money, — mother ought to thank him for that! — and he won't promise to earn much money, either. He has no idea of keeping me in the state to which the Lord called me. He says if I want that, I can marry Stephen Lane or any other man. He means to earn enough for a sensible woman to live on, he says, and if I am not content with what he chooses to do for me I can go out and learn how to earn some more for myself! Did you ever hear of a man who had the nerve to talk that way to the woman he wants to marry? . . .

We are going to have a laboratory on the West Side, — that gave Mrs. P. another fit, —and over it we'll have our rooms. Then when he's made enough rabbits dotty with his bug, and has written his papers, maybe we'll go abroad. . . .

There are lots of other things, *your* things, I want to talk over, but I am afraid my pen is too blunt for them. Only, I hope, oh, so much, dear, that you are to be happy again. Mr. Wheeler told me that Jack was with you now. My love to the Prodigal Man. Good-by, dear. . .

"Isn't it good!" Helen exclaimed, with the readiness of good women to welcome a newcomer to that state which has brought them such doubtful happiness.

"I shouldn't think he would have been the man to satisfy her," Jackson answered slowly.

"I think Dr. Coburn has changed a good deal since you knew him. He had fine things in him, and Venetia could see them."

"I always thought she was ambitious, and the reason she didn't marry was because she couldn't find any one out there to give her everything she was after."

"Perhaps Venetia has seen enough already of that kind of thing!"

CHAPTER XXXI

There was a stir among the reporters gathered in the little room where the coroner's inquest on the Glenmore fire was being held, when it became known that the architect was present and was to be examined. Graves's man, Gotz, the president of the hotel company, had finished his testimony on the previous day, having displayed a marvellous capacity for ignorance. Under advice from his employer's lawyer he had refused to answer every important question put to him, on the plea that it was irrelevant. The coroner had been scarcely more successful with other witnesses in his endeavors to determine the exact causes for the large loss of life in the new hotel, and his inquest was closing in failure. The yelping pack of newspapers had already raised their cry in another field; public interest in the Glenmore disaster had begun to wane; and it was generally believed that nothing would come of the inquest, not even a hearing before the Grand Jury. The whole affair appeared to be but another instance of the impotence of our system of government in getting at the real offenders against society, if they are cunning and powerful.

That morning, as the Harts were preparing to go to the hearing the doctor had called to see little Powers, for

the child's feverish cold threatened to develop into pneumonia. After the doctor had gone, the architect went upstairs to the sickroom, where Helen was seated on the bed playing with Powers, and trying to soothe him. As he stood there silently watching them, he was tormented by a sudden fear, a terrible presentiment, that the child was to die, and thus he was to pay for his sins, and not only he, but Helen. She was to pay with him, even more than he! He tried to rid himself of the hysterical and foolish idea, but it persisted, prompted by that rough sense of retribution — an acknowledgment of supreme justice — that most men retain all their lives.

"I shall have to go now," he said to her at last. "But you mustn't think of coming. You must stay with the boy."

"Oh, no!" Helen exclaimed quickly, looking closely at the child. "The doctor says there is nothing to fear yet. Everything has been done that I can do, and your mother will stay with him while we are away. It won't be long, anyway!"

"Why do you insist upon coming?" he protested almost irritably. "It won't be exactly pleasant, and you may have to hang around there for hours."

"Don't you want me to go with you, and be there, Francis?" she asked a little sadly.

He made no reply, feeling ashamed to confess that it would make the coming scene all the more painful to know that she was hearing again in all its repulsive detail the story of his participation in the criminal construction of the Glenmore hotel.

"I think I had better go," she said finally, "and I want to go!"

She wished to be near him at the end, after he had performed this difficult act; to be near him when he came out from the hearing and walked home with the knowledge of the public disgrace preparing for him at the hands of the hungry reporters. Then, she divined, would come upon him the full bitterness of his position.

The hearing proceeded slowly, and it was the middle of the afternoon before the architect was called. The coroner, a grizzled little German-American with an important manner, put on his spectacles to examine the new witness, and the members of the coroner's jury, who knew that the architect had left the city immediately after the fire and were surprised at his return, evinced their curiosity by leaning forward and staring at Hart.

The first questions put to him were directed toward gaining information about the corporation that owned the building. As Mr. Hart was the treasurer of the Glenmore company, presumably he held stock in the corporation? A large amount? No, he had had some stock, but had disposed of it. Recently? Some time ago. To whom? The witness refused to answer. Had he paid cash for his stock? The witness refused to answer: he had been told by his lawyer that all such questions were not pertinent to the present inquiry. But who, then, were the chief stockholders? who were,

in fact, the Glenmore company? Again the architect refused to answer; indeed, he was not sure that he knew. The coroner, baffled on this line, and knowing well enough in a general way at least from previous witnesses that nothing was to be unearthed here, turned to more vital matters.

"Mr. Hart," he said, clearing his throat and looking gravely at the witness, "I understand that you were the architect for this hotel?"

"Yes."

"You drew the plans and specifications for the Glenmore?"

"Yes, they were prepared in my office."

"Were they the same that you see here?"

The coroner motioned toward the roll of plans that had been taken from the files of the Building Department.

"Yes," the architect answered readily, merely glancing at the plans, "those were the plans for the hotel as originally prepared by me."

"Now I want to ask if the Glenmore hotel was built according to these plans?"

The architect hesitated. Every one in the room knew well enough by this time that the building destroyed by fire had not been erected according to these plans, but, nevertheless, they waited eagerly for the reply.

"Few buildings," Hart began explanatorily, "are completed in all respects according to the original plans and specifications."

"Ah, is that so?"

"But these plans were very considerably altered," the witness continued voluntarily.

"By whom? By you? With your consent, your approval?"

The architect hesitated again for a few moments, and then answered rapidly: —

"With my knowledge, certainly; yes, you may say with my consent!"

There was a little delay in the inquiry at this point, while the coroner consulted with his counsel as to the next questions that should be addressed to the witness. The architect gazed doggedly before him, keeping his eyes on the dirty window above the heads of the jury. In the dingy light of the little room, his face appeared yellow and old. His mouth twitched occasionally beneath his mustache, but otherwise he stood with composure waiting for the next question, which he knew would pierce to the heart of the matter.

"Mr. Hart," the coroner resumed, "will you describe to us what those alterations in the plans for the Glenmore were, what was the nature of them?"

The witness considered how he was to answer the question, and then he proceeded to explain the most important discrepancies between the building as it had been erected by Graves and the plans that had been filed with the Building Department. He described the use of the old walls and foundations, the reduction in the thickness of the bearing-walls and partitions, the chief substitutions of wood for steel in the upper stories, the omitting of fireproof partitions and fire-escapes, etc., —

in short, all the methods of "skinning" the construction, in which the contractor was such an adept. He referred from time to time to the plans, and used technical terms, which he was asked to explain. But the jury listened with absorbed interest, and he kept on until he had answered the question thoroughly.

"As an architect," the coroner asked, when Hart had completed his explanation, "will you state whether, in your judgment, these changes that you have described, especially the substitution of inflammable material for fireproofing and the weakening of the main walls, were sufficient to account for the great loss of life in the fire?"

The answer to such a question could be only speculative, — an individual opinion, — and the witness might properly refuse to commit himself. The architect hesitated, and then with a quick motion of the head, as if he were sick of evasions, said: —

"There are a good many buildings here in Chicago and in other large cities that are no safer than the Glenmore was. But if you want my opinion, I will say that such alterations as I have indicated tended to weaken the walls, and in other ways to bring the building below the danger limit."

"It was what might be called a fire-trap, then?"

"I did not say that!"

Feeling that at last he had found an easy witness, the coroner began to bully, and there ensued a wrangle between him and the architect, in which both men became heated.

"Well, Mr. Hart," a member of the jury finally interposed with a question, "can you say that the Glenmore as it was built conformed to the building ordinances of the city of Chicago?"

"It would take a number of experts and a good lawyer to interpret those ordinances!" the architect answered testily. "I should say that they were drawn for the express purpose of being violated."

There was a laugh along the reporters' bench at this retort. But the witness quickly added in his former contained manner: —

"No, the Glenmore violated the ordinances in a number of important particulars."

There was a sudden hush in the room. This point had been established before by different persons who had been examined. Nevertheless, the admission coming from the architect of the ill-fated building was an important point. It might lead to other interesting admissions.

"You were aware, then, when the Glenmore was being erected that it violated the ordinances?"

"Yes."

"Did you make any protest?"

"No."

"Did you know when you undertook the plans that the hotel was to be built in this manner?"

"I knew that it was to be put up for a certain sum, and that a first-class fire-proof building conforming to the ordinances could not be built for that money."

A number of questions followed in regard to the actual

cost of the hotel and the connection of the Graves Construction Company with the owners of the building, many of which the architect refused to answer. At last the coroner returned to the one point on which he had been successful in eliciting vital information, — the character of the burned building, and the circumstances of its construction.

"I suppose the building was inspected during the construction?"

"Certainly."

"By whom?"

"As usual, by different inspectors from the building department. Mr. Murphy was there several times, I remember, and Mr. Lagrange, among others. But I think chiefly Mr. Murphy."

"Were you present during their inspection?"

"Not always."

"Did either of these gentlemen find anything to object to in the method of construction?"

"I never heard of any objection. Nothing was ever said to me. The inspectors might have talked to the contractors. But I don't think any one of them did."

"Have you reason to believe that there was any collusion between the inspectors and the Graves Company?"

Every one in the room knew that there must have been collusion. Nevertheless, the architect, after hesitation, said: —

"I shan't answer that, sir."

"You refuse to reply?"

"See here, Mr. Coroner! I am here to tell you what I know about the Glenmore, — at least so far as it concerns my own responsibility, my own work. But I am not here to testify against the Graves Construction Company. Understand that!"

"Well, I should say that you and the Graves Company were pretty well mixed in this matter. You were an officer of the corporation which employed the Graves Company to build a hotel on your plans. Could there be any closer connection than that, do you think?"

To this observation Hart made no reply, and finally the member of the jury who had interposed before put another question to the witness: —

"You have told us that the Glenmore was not properly built, was not what it pretended to be, a fire-proof building, and generally violated the ordinance for that class of building. Do you consider yourself in any way responsible for those violations?"

"Yes," the architect replied slowly, "I suppose so. At least I knew all about it!"

"You considered it a dangerous building?"

"I can't say that I did. I should consider it so now. I didn't think much about it then."

The witness's admission came with evident effort; the juryman continued insinuatingly: —

"Mr. Hart, I believe that you were present at the fire?"

"Yes."

"Did you then believe that if the hotel had been built according to these plans" — he pointed to the roll of blue

prints on the table — "the large loss of life would not have occurred?"

"I felt so, — yes, I believe so now!"

"May I ask one more question? Was it for your interest to make these changes? Did you make any money out of the job beyond your customary commission?"

It was a question that the witness might properly refuse to answer as having no direct bearing on the object of the inquest. But the architect was weary of quibbles, — indeed, eager to make his testimony as thorough as might be, and to have it over.

"Not directly, but I was an officer of the company, and beside — "

"Indirectly, then, you benefited?"

"Yes, indirectly."

"That is all, Mr. Hart."

A few more questions were asked by the coroner about the inspection of the building by Murphy and Lagrange, and also in regard to the architect's previous relations with the Graves Company. Then the witness was excused.

When the architect stepped back into the room, he saw Wheeler sitting beside Helen in the rear. They waited for him at the door, and together the three went out to the street. The lawyer, who had reached the hearing in time for most of the testimony, smiled rather grimly as he remarked to his cousin: —

"Well, Jack, you gave them about everything they were after! You needn't have turned yourself quite inside out."

"It was perfect!" Helen exclaimed, taking her husband's arm. "Everything you said was right. I wouldn't have had you change a word."

Wheeler buttoned his coat against the east wind and smiled tolerantly at the woman's fervor.

"Will that be all, Everett?" she asked a little defiantly.

"For the present," he replied after a pause, and then he nodded good-by.

"What did he mean?" she asked her husband, as they threaded the crowded street leading to the North Side bridge.

"That they will hold me to the Grand Jury, I suppose."

Her hand which clasped his arm tightened involuntarily at the words, and they continued their way silently to the old Ohio Street house.

CHAPTER XXXII

When they entered the house, Helen hurried upstairs to the child, who had been calling for her, Mrs. Hart said. Presently the doctor came for his evening visit, and when, after a long time, he left the sickroom, Jackson met him in the hall, but lacked the courage to ask any question. The doctor spoke bruskly about the bad weather, and hurried off. Then Hart walked to and fro in the gloomy dining-room until his mother came down for dinner, which they ate in silence.

Before they had finished their meal the bell rang, and in reply to the maid's excuses at the door there sounded in the hall a strong woman's voice.

"But I *must* see them!"

Jackson, recognizing Venetia Phillips's voice, stepped into the hall.

"Oh, Jack! I have just heard that you were all here. We met Everett at the station, and he told me all about it. Jack, it was fine! I didn't think you had it in you, Jackie, dear. To stand up there and give everything away, — it took real stuff. I know it!" She held out her hand in enthusiastic heartiness, repeating, "It was fine, fine!" Suddenly she turned back to the door, where Coburn stood.

"You know Dr. Coburn, Jack! I brought him along, too—I was in such a hurry to see you all. Where's Helen?"

"Yes, I just butted in," Coburn said, laughing. "I wouldn't let her come without me. I wanted to shake on it, too!"

"But where's that sainted wife of yours?" Venetia persisted.

When Jackson told her of the boy's illness, she hurried upstairs without another word, leaving the two men standing in the library. At first, when they were alone, with the common memory of that last meeting in the doctor's rooms barely a week before, there was an awkward silence. Coburn had now an explanation for the architect's erratic behavior on that occasion, and he refrained from his usual blunt speech. And the architect, seeing through the mist of accumulated impressions, as in a long vista, that night after the fire when Coburn had found him half-crazed, a prey to horrible visions, could not speak. Yet that experience seemed removed from the present, as if it rose from distant years, and somehow belonged to another person. Although he had never liked Coburn in the old days, he felt a kind of sympathy in the doctor's bearing, and was grateful for it.

"You must have thought I was crazy the other night," the architect remarked apologetically at last. "I didn't know much what I was up to!"

"That's all right, man," Coburn interrupted warmly. "Don't think about it again. It was damn good luck my running across you, that's all. If I'd known, of course—

Say! that took sand, what you did to-day. Wheeler told Venetia all about it, and she told me. It makes a man feel good to see some one who has got the nerve to stand up and take medicine, and not try everlastingly to sneak out of things! If more folks nowadays would do that, it would be better for us all. Don't you mind what the papers say. They have to fling mud, — that's their game!"

"Well, it doesn't make much difference now what they say except, — except for my wife," Jackson answered dully. "And that can't be helped."

"Oh, I guess it won't last long. And somehow women don't mind those things half as much as you'd think, at least the best ones don't. And from what Venetia says, yours is one of the best!"

"Yes! That doesn't make it any easier. But I haven't congratulated you!" he exclaimed, repressing the confession of his own pain. "She is a splendid woman, lots of spirit," he remarked awkwardly.

"I rather think so!" A pleased smile illuminated the doctor's grave face. "She's just about the best ever!"

"I hope you will be happy," Jackson continued conventionally.

"Well, we expect to — don't see why we shouldn't. I guess we know pretty much what's to be found on *both* sides, and won't make ourselves uncomfortable looking for what ain't there."

Venetia came down the stairs very quietly, her exuberance all gone, and as she entered the room she was still wiping away the traces of tears.

"Poor little Powers!" she exclaimed. "Oh, Jack! I am terribly sorry."

"What's the matter?" Coburn demanded.

"It's pneumonia, poor little man!"

Jackson's lip trembled beneath his mustache, as he murmured to himself: —

"Yes, I supposed it would be. It's as tough as it well could be, for *her!*"

"I know he'll come through, — he *must!*" Venetia exclaimed helplessly, and added in a burst of admiration, "That trouble couldn't happen to Helen — it just couldn't! She's so splendid, Jack! It's a big thing to know there are such women about. She's holding him up there now, with a smile on her face!"

Jackson turned away from her eager eyes.

Again and again during the days that followed, while they worked for the child's life, and when all was done watched and waited together for what might come, that miserable foreboding of the first day came back to the man. An evil fate seemed close on his heels, ready to lay hand on him here or there. The illness of the child related itself in some unseen manner with the great catastrophe of his life. The old idea of retribution, that barbaric conception of blood sacrifice, tormented him, as it torments the most sceptical in the hour of crisis. It appeared to him that for his cowardice of nature, for all his weak and evil deeds, for the unknown dead in whose death he had connived, he was about to be called to pay with the life of his own child.

And the mother, guiltless, in the inscrutable cruelty of fate, must pay with him and pay the larger share of the price of his evil, of his nature!

But during these days of dread the woman went her way calmly, serenely, prepared, outwardly at least, for any event. What the child's death would mean to her was known only to herself, for she consumed her grief patiently in the silence of the watch. The house grew more sombre, as day by day the struggle for life moved on to its crisis. Little Powers, like his mother, made his fight with unchildish patience. He had always been the quieter, less demonstrative one of the two boys, possessing a singular power of silence and abstraction, which had been attributed to physical weakness. Yet under the stress of disease he showed an unexpected resistance and vitality. The father, when he saw him lying in the great bed, with pathetic moments of playfulness even in the height of his fever, could not stay by his side. . . .

The suspense of the child's illness mercifully threw all outer happenings into shade. Jackson was able to keep the newspapers away from Helen, and she asked no questions. His testimony at the inquest had revived to some extent the waning public interest in the Glenmore fire. Especially the *Buzzard*, which had assumed to itself all the credit for airing the conditions in the building department, made merry over Hart's replies to the coroner. It printed full-page cuts of scenes at the inquest that last day, when the architect was on the stand, —dramatic sketches of "tilts between the coroner and Hart," "Hart's insolent retorts," etc.; and it denounced

editorially, with its peculiar unction of self-esteem, the "systematic corruption of the nation by such men as Graves, Hart, and their allies." But the *Thunderer* and the more respectable papers refrained from all such bitter insinuations. For some reason they forbore to pillory the only man who had voluntarily come forward and told all that he knew. Perhaps they respected the courage of the act; perhaps they were aware that their patrons had tired of "the Glenmore tragedy"; perhaps they felt that the real guilt lay too deep to be reached by their editorial darts. However that might be, the matter rested now with the district attorney and the Grand Jury.

For the inquest had been concluded and the coroner's report was published. It covered lengthily all the points touched upon by the many witnesses, and it contained much "scoring" of the city authorities. The contractor, Graves, the inspectors, Murphy and Lagrange, Gotz, the president of the defunct corporation, and Hart, were held to the Grand Jury for complicity in the death of the seventeen persons who had perished in the Glenmore fire. . . .

Meanwhile the worst hour of anxiety for the child's life came, and Helen knelt by the bed holding the little body in her arms, devouring his face with her shining eyes. The hour passed, the child lived, there was hope of his recovery. Yet for a period they went to and fro softly, with that peculiar hush of fear scarcely relieved, lest their hopes might be too strong.

At last, however, Jackson was obliged to tell Helen what had happened at the inquest. She listened as to a message from a far land, her face blanched and set from the hours of fear through which she had passed. When he said that he, with the others, had been held to the Grand Jury, she merely asked:—

"When will that be?"

"Very soon, less than a fortnight, Everett says. He called here yesterday. He advised me to leave the city, — he came to see about that."

"What will they do?" she asked, not heeding the last remark.

"If they find a true bill, it will go to the trial jury. And," he added slowly, "the charge will be manslaughter."

She started as he pronounced the word. In her ears it was the legal synonym for murder, and before the awfulness of that conception her heart recoiled.

"Manslaughter!" she repeated involuntarily.

"Yes, but Everett thinks it is very doubtful whether the Grand Jury will find a true bill against any one. It would be almost an unheard-of thing to do. Of course, Graves will stay away until he sees how it will turn out, and probably the others will keep out of reach. Everett wants me to go —"

"No, no!" she cried, "never! You have come all this way on the hard road, and we must go on to the very end, no matter what that is."

"So I thought you would feel," he answered gently. "I said the same thing to Everett. Of course, the justice

of it isn't very clear. It's mixed up with politics, anyway. I don't know that it would do much good to any one to stay and be tried. But if you feel that way —"

She laid her hand on his arm, imploring him mutely not to give her all the responsibility for the decision.

"Think what it might mean, if — if they found me guilty!" he muttered gloomily.

"I know," she shuddered. "But Francis, we must pay somehow, you and I. We must pay!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

But if in her heroic soul she was ready to pay, and to make him pay, at the price of public shame for her and her children, the full penalty of his misdeeds, it was not to be so. He was to escape the full measure of retribution, shielded by the accident of his class. Unknown to him, the tangled threads of his fate were being sorted in the great city, and the vengeance of society was being averted, so far, at least, as legal punishment was concerned. Everett Wheeler, once recovered from his disgust at the sentimental folly of the architect's confession at the inquest, had no mind to see his cousin on trial for manslaughter. His mood was invariably to settle things, to cover them up, to bury them! As has been said, he had political influence, enough to reach even to the district attorney's office, enough to close the mouth of the *Chicago Buzzard*, to quiet the snarls of the *Thunderer*. So the case against the men held to the Grand Jury for the hotel disaster was quietly dropped. The mayor put another man in Bloom's place as chief building inspector, and very soon things went merrily on in their old way. And that was the end of it all! The seventeen human beings who had lost their lives in the fire had not even pointed a moral by their agonizing death. For a few

summer months the gaunt, smoke-blackened pit of ruins on the boulevard served to remind the passers-by of a grewsome tale. Then, by the beginning of the new year, in its place rose a splendid apartment building, faced with cut stone and trimmed with marble.

Wheeler notified the architect in a curt note that the case had been dismissed, and Jackson showed the letter to his wife.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed fervently, "that is the end. I shan't drag you into the mud any farther."

Helen looked up from the lawyer's letter with a troubled face. She had hardened herself to the coming trial, which she had fully expected. Now that it had been spared, all was not yet right to her scrupulous perception. A terrible wrong had been committed, a wrong to the poor souls who had lost their lives, a wrong, too, to the city and to society, making an evil pool of corruption. And in some mysterious way this had been covered up, hidden, and all was to go on as before! She had a primitive idea that all evil necessitated exact payment, and as long as this payment was deferred, so long was the day of light, of health, put off.

But the man, realizing more clearly than she the indirect penalties which his situation inevitably imposed, gave no further thought to the abstract question of justice. The outlook was bad enough as it was. He saw nothing before him in this city where he naturally belonged.

"What would you think of our moving to St. Louis?" he asked, a few days after he had received the lawyer's

letter. "There is some sort of an opening there for me. Of course I had rather be in New York, but it is out of the question. It would take too long to get started. Or we might try Denver. I have done some work there, and it's a growing place."

"Do you think that we must leave Chicago?" she asked.

"Why!" he exclaimed, surprised that she should consider for a moment the possibility of their remaining where he had made such a failure of his life. "Do you want to stay here and be dropped by every soul you have known?"

"I don't care very much for that!"

"Well, there's nothing here for me. Stewart will take the office. He let me know mighty quick that we had better part! I am a dead dog in Chicago. Only yesterday I got a letter from the Ricker Brothers turning me down after telling me last month to go ahead. They pay for the work done so far, and that is all. You see it is out of the question to stay here!"

He spoke gloomily, as if in spite of all that had happened he had some grounds for feeling a little sore.

"But I don't mean to let this down me, not yet," he continued more buoyantly. "I owe it to you, at least, to make good. And I can do it somewhere else, where the sight of this mess isn't always in my eyes! It'll only be a matter of a few years, Nell."

Already the bitterness of the crisis was passing away, and he was beginning to plan for the future, for a career, for success,—built on a surer foundation, but nevertheless

success and repute in the world. His wife realized it and understood. She was standing by his side, as he sat with his elbows resting on his knees, studying the faded figure in the carpet. She put her hands on his head and drew it toward her, protectingly, pityingly, as she would the bruised head of a child.

"So you think you must begin somewhere else?" she said gently, sitting down by his side.

"It's the only thing to do. The question is where!"

She made no reply and seemed buried in her thoughts.

"By the way," he remarked, "whom do you think I saw on the street to-day? Wright. He was staring at Letterson's new store, — you know Frank Peyton did it. The old man stopped me and seemed really glad to see me. I suppose he knows everything, too," he added musingly.

The incident comforted him greatly. He had seen Wright in the crowded street, and had looked away from him, meaning to hurry past, but the older man had stretched out his long arm and good-naturedly drawn Hart to one side out of the press of the street.

"How are you, Hart?" he had said cordially, with his boyish smile. "What do you think of this thing? Bold, isn't it? That Peyton's got nerve to put up this spider-web right here in State Street. Now, I couldn't do that! But I guess he's on the right track. That's what we are coming to. What do you think?"

They had walked down the street together, and Wright had continued to talk of Peyton and the other young architects in the city, and of their work.

"I tell you, those youngsters have got the future. They have the courage to try experiments. That won't do for an old fellow like me. My clients would kick, too, if I took to anything new. But I like to see the young ones try it. . . . What are you doing?" he had asked abruptly. "Come in to see me, won't you? I shall be here two or three weeks. Be sure to come in, now!"

They had shaken hands, and the older architect had looked searchingly into Hart's face, his boyish smile changing subtly into an expression of concern and sweetness, as if there was something on the tip of his tongue which he refrained from saying there in the crowded street. The memory of the little meeting came back to the man now, and he felt more grateful for Wright's cordiality than he had at the time.

"Wright asked me to come in and see him. I think I will do it some day," he remarked presently.

"Why not give up the idea of starting your own office?" Helen asked suddenly, her thoughts having come to a definite point.

"What do you mean? Try something else? It would be pretty risky," he answered doubtfully, surprised that she should want him to abandon his profession, to admit defeat.

"I didn't mean that, exactly. It wouldn't do at all for you to give up architecture. That never entered my mind. Only — listen!"

She slipped from the lounge where she had been sitting and knelt beside him, taking the lapels of his coat in her hands, her face aglow with a sudden enthusiasm.

"I've been thinking of so many things these last months, and lately, while Powers has been so sick, I've thought of everything since we were in Italy together, since I loved you, — all those talks we had, and the plans we made, the work you did, the sketches — those first ones." She paused, trying to put her tumultuous thoughts in order.

"I grow so slowly! I was so ignorant of everything, of myself and you in those days. It has taken me a long time, dear, to understand, to grow up!" she exclaimed, her lips trembling in a little smile.

"We stumbled almost at the start, you and I. You started your office and worked hard, always striving to get ahead, to get us comforts and position, and not because you liked the things you were doing. You took anything that promised to bring in money. And it got worse and worse, the more we had. It used to trouble me then, 'way back, but I didn't know what was the matter with it all. We lived out there with all those rich people around us. And those we knew that weren't very rich were all trying to get richer, to have the same things the others had. We did what they did, and thought what they thought, and tried to live as they did. It wasn't honest!"

"What do you mean by that?" he asked blankly.

"I'll say it clearly; just give me time, dear! It is true, but it is made up of so many little, unimportant trifles. You worked just to get money, and we spent it all on ourselves, or pretty nearly all. And the more we had, the more we seemed to need. No man ought to

work that way! It ruins him in the end. That's why there are so many common, brutal men and women everywhere. They work for the pay, and for nothing else."

"Oh, not always."

"Most of those we knew did," she replied confidently.

"Well, it's the law of life," he protested with a touch of his old superiority in his tone.

"No, it isn't, it isn't!" she exclaimed vehemently. "Never! There are other laws. Work is good in itself, not just for the pay, and we must live so that the pay makes less difference, so that we haven't to think of the pay!"

"I don't see what this has to do with our going to St. Louis!" he interjected impatiently, disinclined for a theoretic discussion of the aims of life, when the question of bread and butter was immediately pressing.

"But it has, Francis, dear. It has! If you go there, you will try to live the old way. You will try to get ahead, to struggle up in the world, as it is called, and that is the root of all the trouble! That is what I have come to see all these months. We are all trying to get out of the ranks, to leave the common work to be done by others, to be leaders. We think it a disgrace to stay in the ranks, to work for the work's sake, to bear the common lot, which is to live humbly and labor! Don't let us struggle that way any longer, dear. It is wrong, — it is a curse. It will never give us happiness — never!"

He began to see the drift of her purpose, and resented it with all the prejudice of his training, — resented, at least, the application of it to him.

"The ranks are crowded enough as it is! I don't see the call for a man to put himself into them if he has the ability to do any better, I must say!"

"Not if — not after all that has happened?" she asked mournfully.

"Oh! that's it. You think that it's only *I* who should go down, meekly give up all ambition, because I can't be trusted? You are afraid that I will go wrong?" he retorted bitterly.

"No, not that quite! Yet —" she hesitated, aware that the new love between them hung in the balance. Then she went on courageously: "No, I have no fear of that. You couldn't! But the temptation to make money will be before you every moment, and to-day few men can resist that. It is better to be in the ranks than to struggle to lead, and then lead falsely, trying for false things, —false things!"

"That is what you think of me!" he repeated mournfully.

In spite of all the experience which had come to him the last weeks, all that he had confessed to himself and to his wife, it was bitter to realize that she refused him now that absolute faith and blind confidence in his guidance which had made courtship and the first years of marriage such a pleasant tribute to his egotism. He had come back to her repentant; he had said, "I have erred. I repent. Will you forgive me and love me?" And she had taken him to herself again with a deeper acceptance than at first. Yet when it came to the point of action, she seemed to be withdrawing her forgiveness, to be judging and condemning him.

In this he wronged her. What she was trying hesitantly and imperfectly to say to him was not merely the lesson of his catastrophe, but the fruited thought of her life, — what had come to her through her imperfect, groping education, through the division of their marriage, through her children, through the empty dinner parties in the society he had sought, through the vacancy in her heart, — yes! through the love that she had for him. While she was silent, clinging to him, baffled, he spoke again: —

"Don't you see that I want to retrieve myself, and make some amends to you for all that I have made you suffer? You would kill every ambition in me, even the one to work for you and the boys!"

"That would not make me happy, not if you made as great a fortune as uncle Powers! Not that way!"

"What would, then?"

"Do you remember some of those first things you did? The little country club at Oak Hills? I was awfully happy when you showed me that," she said softly, irrelevantly. "Somehow I know you could do that again and better things, too, if — if you could forget the money and all that. Real, honest work! You could be the artist I know you are, the maker of honest, fine buildings!"

In the enthusiasm of her face he read dimly once more the long-past dream of his youth, the talk of young men in the studios, the hours by her side on the steamer, when they had come together in the imperfect attraction of sex. It was but the flicker of a distant light, however; he had learned the lesson of the city too well.

"That sounds very well. But it isn't practical. If you want to do big work, you have to be your own master, and not work for some one else! And art, especially architecture, lives on the luxury of the rich, whom you seem to despise!"

"What does it matter whose name goes on the plans? It's the work that makes it that counts, and no one can have that but the one who does it."

"Now, you're talking poetry, Nell, not sense!" he exclaimed good-naturedly, getting up from the lounge and walking to and fro. "This world doesn't run on those lines, and you and I aren't going to make it over, either. You're talking like a romantic girl!"

"There isn't much else of the girl left in me!" she smiled wistfully back to him.

"Just look at it practically. If I go out of business for myself, I couldn't earn more than two hundred a month working for some firm. That's as much as Wright ever pays his best men. What would that be to live on? For you and me and the boys?"

"We could make it do. There are many others who have less."

"Next you will want to take in washing."

"I had rather do the cooking, when it comes to that," she flashed back.

"I can see us in a four-room flat somewhere south on one of those God-forsaken prairie streets. One slovenly maid, and the food! A cigar on Sundays and holidays! You would buy your clothes over the counter at Letterson's and go bargain-hunting for your weekly amusement.

No, thank you! I am not quite so far gone yet as that, my dear. You don't realize the facts."

His mind was not open to her conception, even in its simplest application. To him a small income with its manner of life meant merely degradation. She saw, as never before, how Chicago had moulded him and had left his nature set in a hard crust of prejudice. The great industrial city where he had learned the lesson of life throttled the finer aspirations of men like a remorseless giant, converting its youth into iron-clawed beasts of prey, answering to the one hoarse cry, "Success, Success, Success!"

"And how should we educate the boys? Think of it! How could we give them as good a start in life as we had? Why, it would be criminal to them. It's nonsense!"

"I have thought of them," she replied calmly. "And I am willing to take the risks for them, too. I am willing to see them start in life poor, with just what we could do for them. Perhaps in the world to which they will grow up, things will be different, anyway."

He had tested her in the tenderest point, and she was stanch. He began to see how far this theory of living and working in the world went with her. She was ready to put herself outside her own class, and her children also, for the sake of an idea, a feeling that she had about man's true purpose in life.

"I must go to Powers, now," she said at last, a little sadly. Before she left the room she went up to him impulsively and leaned her head against his breast for a moment. "Perhaps in time you will come to feel more

as I do. And, Francis, there's another reason why I should hate to have us leave this place. I don't want to think that you are running away from the disgrace, from the trouble which has happened here!" She raised her head proudly. "That is what all cheap people do, go to some place where they aren't known; as if it mattered to us now what people think or say! I want you to stay right here, where it happened, and make a new life here."

After she had left him, he continued to walk to and fro in his uncle's old library, between the heavy black-walnut bookcases, where it was permitted to him now to smoke as many cigarettes as he liked. The house had been left very much as it was during the old man's life. Now that Mrs. Amelia Hart was free to make those domestic changes which had been denied to her while the owner lived, she had never come to the necessary resolution. Powers Jackson's will was still effective with her, even in death.

The architect thought of the old man, wondering vaguely what he would have said to Helen's argument. He was not so sure as formerly that he understood the rough old fellow, who apparently had grasped the main chance and wrung it dry. His uncle's purpose in endowing that school struck him suddenly as complex, and also his treatment of himself. Possibly he, too, — the successful man of his day, — having exploited the world for forty years, had come to the belief that ambition in the ordinary sense of the word was futile. . . .

The architect had not thought to sneak away from the place where he had gone to failure when he suggested to his wife starting life once more in a new city. It had seemed merely ordinary good judgment to go where he should not be hampered by a clouded past. And he resented his wife's feeling that he should remain and do a kind of penance for the sins that he had confessed, repented, and repaired so far as he was able. She asked too much of him! He had given up all the money he had, and was ready to begin the struggle for bread with a fairer view of his duties. But it seemed that that was not enough for her: she demanded now that he sacrifice his ambition, that he return to the ranks, as a draughtsman, a clerk, a hireling!

Nevertheless, her words worked unconsciously in him, for hers was the stronger nature. He had lived his own way and had failed, rather miserably. What she wanted must, perforce, guide him increasingly and determine his life. Presently he went upstairs to the child's room. There in the darkened chamber Helen was kneeling beside the bed holding little Powers in her strong arms. The child was asleep, his thin arms stretched above his head along the pillow. In the large bed the little figure, white and wasted with the lingering fever of his disease, lay peacefully. Helen turned her face to her husband as he entered, and he could see the smile that belied the tears in her eyes. And as he stood there in the silent room watching the two, the calm of elemental feeling stole over him. The woman and the child! These were the ancient, unalterable factors of human life; outside of

them the multitudinous desires of men were shifting, trivial, little. For the first time in his life an indifference to all else in the world swept over him in gratitude for these two gifts. . . .

CHAPTER XXXIV

Dr. Coburn had at last found time for the episode of matrimony, so Venetia announced to Helen one afternoon. She had run in on her way to the city, and her eyes sparkled mischievously as she added: —

"It's just as well to have it over before Mrs. P. returns —it will save her so much embarrassment, you know. She won't have to strike an attitude. And it's lots easier this way, no fuss, no bother, and you have it all to yourself. Can you and Jack come 'round to-morrow afternoon about four? Dr. Knowles's Church—you know where it is. Don't be late." As she started for the door, she turned swiftly, threw her arms about the older woman, and kissed her vehemently.

"Do you know, puss, I think we are going to be awfully happy!" And then she darted out of the door.

They met Venetia and the doctor at the door of the church. Coburn, who had on a new brown business suit that betrayed its origin by its numerous creases, grinned very broadly as he raised his hat to Helen.

"Come here, Pete," Venetia called busily to the old terrier, who hobbled after her. "Pete had to come to see us married," she explained, as she tied him to the iron fence near the entrance. "But I don't suppose Dr.

Knowles would like to have him come in and sit in the corner of a pew. I'm sure he'd behave very well, though! Uncle Harry couldn't come, poor dear; he's over in Carlsbad taking the cure, — but he wrote such a nice letter to my man. We didn't ask anybody else. Well, are we all ready?"

"Just about!" the doctor answered briskly. "Fine day for a wedding, isn't it?"

"Don't whimper, Pete," Venetia said for a last warning, turning to the dog, and patting him once more. "Your missy won't be gone long, and when she comes back, you'll have cream for your supper and fruit-cake, too."

Then the four walked up the long aisle of the great bare church, and presently Dr. Knowles came from the vestry and performed the ceremony. Venetia stood very still and straight, drawing in her breath in little gasps, looking very hard at the broad face of the minister. Coburn, too, stood very straight, but Helen, who watched the two lovingly while the words of the contract rolled forth in the empty church, saw the look of tenderness in the man's face as his glance rested steadfastly on the woman by his side.

In a few minutes they were out again in the sunlight. Pete was surrounded by a group of small boys, who were debating whether he would bite if they got near enough to him.

"Here, boys," Venetia called, as she untied Pete's leash. "This is the day you must celebrate! Give me some money, Sayre."

And she distributed to the delighted urchins all the

silver that the doctor had in his pockets. Then the four went to a restaurant in the city, where they had dinner together, Jackson ordering the champagne, and they talked until Helen rose and declared it was time to leave the bride and bridegroom. The doctor and Venetia walked off westward to their new home, arm in arm, Pete dangling in the rear from his leash, which his mistress held.

"What good times they will have!" Helen exclaimed, watching them bob across the gayly lighted thoroughfare, dragging the terrier after them. "I suppose it's because they're both what Venetia would call 'real clear sports.'"

After the newly married couple had disappeared, the Harts walked leisurely northwards, and as the night was calm and warm, they kept on beyond Ohio Street, strolling along the shore of the lake towards the Park. The great houses across the boulevard were already deserted by their occupants, who had begun the annual migration. The architect's eye roved over the gloomy façades of these monstrous piles of brick and stone, to which the toilsome steps of some successful ones in the city had led; and he began to wonder, as he had when a boy, why in this world, which seemed to hold so many pleasant things, the owners of these ugly houses could be content to live in them. To the boy's mind the ambition to encase one's self in a great dwelling had seemed so inadequate! Again, to-night, he looked at their burly shadows, and speculated over them without envy.

They loitered arm in arm beside the sea-wall, listening

to the heaving lake, the cool splash of water on the concrete embankment below the walk.

"Nell, I saw Wright to-day," he remarked thoughtfully, "and had a long talk with him."

She turned her head and waited.

"He's a good deal more of a man than I used to think him!" he went on slowly. "There were a lot of people waiting to see him, and he had to go somewhere, but he didn't seem to mind that. I was there with him a long time. I guess he knows pretty nearly all that has happened to me."

Wright had said nothing about the Glenmore or Graves, however, and Jackson had not gone into his story very far. But the older man had heard, it is true, something here and there, from this man and that, over the lunch table at his club, from one or two men in his office. And he had imagination enough to picture the whole story.

"I told him I was thinking of going somewhere else," Jackson continued slowly.

"What did he say?"

"Oh, a good many things,—he's a pretty human fellow,—looks at many sides of a matter. Well, in the end he offered me a place with him! Not the old thing,—he's got some new men in, and can't put any one ahead of them. I guess he would have to make a place!"

She leaned forward, repressing the question that rose swiftly to her lips. But after a few moments, Jackson answered it slowly.

"I told him that I would like to think it over for a day or two."

She refrained still from questioning him, and they strolled on slowly into the park. There on the benches facing the lake sat many couples, crowded close together, resting after the warm day's work. Along the stone embankment outside the glare of the arc lights the lake heaved in an oily calm without a ripple, and from the dark surface of the water rose a current of cold air. The architect and his wife turned back instinctively into the empty darkness of the boulevard.

"It's pretty good of the old boy to be willing to take back a man who's been on his knees," Jackson mused, breaking the long silence in which they had walked.

"Don't!" she murmured. "That hurts — don't think that!"

"Suppose we try it, Nell," he said quickly. "I know you would like to have me — and perhaps it is best."

"But you mustn't do it just for my sake!"

"I think you are rather fussy!" he retorted. "Why else should I do it, my dear, dear wife?"

"But you might regret it, then! You must be sure, — not do it just to please me, but because you see things as I do, and know that it's the only way for us to live and have peace."

Doubtless she asked too much of the man she loved, for most beings — instinctive creatures — act from a philosophy of purely personal influences. Jackson Hart, certainly, would never have considered relinquishing his ambition to thrust himself forward, to have a career in this world, out of any intellectual convictions. Nor could it be said that his wife's half-formulated arguments had

persuaded him. But she herself had convinced him, the strong, self-contained womanhood in her, her undaunted spirit, with which he lived daily, and which perforce colored his soul. Especially, these latter weeks of suspense and despair, while their child's life was in the balance, she had made him hers. If it were a victory for the woman, it was an emotional victory, which she had won over her husband, — and such victories are the only ones that endure in these matters. He felt her spirit as he had never felt anything else, and realized at last dimly that in all the big questions of life she was right. Beautiful, loving, strong, and fearless, she was his! And what was his "career" against her heart and soul?

"Perhaps you will regret it," he remarked half playfully, "and will want me to change later and do better by you and the children."

"Never, never!" She drew his arm closer to her breast, as if symbolically to show him her absolute content with what she had.

"Well, those fellows will grin when I walk into that office after my little splurge!" He swept his left arm through the air in an arc to describe the upward and downward course of a rocket. "Into the ranks, at last!"

"To work, and live, and love, a little while," she added softly.

"It isn't exactly the way uncle Powers solved the problem!" he remarked teasingly. "I suppose you would have had him stay milking cows on that Vermont farm?"

"I didn't marry him!" she retorted swiftly. "And

perhaps if he had it to do again, he would stay to milk the cows."

"You think so!" he exclaimed sceptically.

For her, at least, there was neither doubt nor hesitation. She answered surely the inarticulate call of the larger world, the call of the multitudes that labor and die without privilege, to share with them the common lot of life.

CHAPTER XXXV

That small fragment of Chicago society which had known the Jackson Harts, and interested itself in their doings, was mildly stirred over the news that the brilliant and promising young architect had been obliged to close his office, and had gone to work for his old employer. Indeed, for some weeks the Harts furnished the Forest Park dinner-tables with a fresh topic of conversation that took the place of the strikes and poor Anthony Crawford's scattered fortune. It contained quite as much food for marvel and moral reflection as either of the others.

More information about the architect's troubles than that provided by the press had got abroad in Forest Park and the Shoreham Club. It was well known, for instance, that Hart had been obliged to dissolve his partnership with Freddie Stewart, owing to grave business irregularities, which extended beyond his connection with the recent disaster. It was generally agreed that his offences must have been very grave indeed to necessitate, at his age, with his influential connection, such a radical change of caste as had happened. Men commonly expressed their contempt because at a crisis he had shown such a deplorable "lack of nerve." They said, and among

them were some of the architect's more intimate friends, that nothing he had done could justify this tame submission. "Why!" Mrs. Phillips exclaimed when she heard of it, "we've seen men live down things ten times worse. There was Peter Sewall, and old Preston, and the banker Potts, and a dozen more. They are as good as any of us to-day! And he needn't have told everything he knew, anyhow, to that old coroner." The measure of a man's guilt, in her eyes and those of many others, was what he was willing to admit to the world. "But it's that wife of his!" the widow continued bitterly. "She never had any spirit; she was cut out for a clerk's wife. I have always felt that she was responsible for Venetia's trouble. Well, she's got to her level at last!"

Finally, this portion of the great public held that under the circumstances the architect had shown singularly little judgment in staying on in the city: there was no "future" for him, under the circumstances, in Chicago. If he felt himself unable to hold his own against scandal, they argued, he should have the wit to leave the city where he had gone wrong and seek his fortune under new skies, where the faces of his successful friends would not remind him constantly of ignoble defeat.

Not that Jackson Hart had many opportunities of encountering his successful friends in the great city of Chicago. He had resigned from his club, and the Harts had moved very far away from the pleasant suburbs along the lake which were filled with their old acquaintances. They had gone to live in one of those flimsy

flat-buildings in the southern part of the city, concerning which the architect had speculated the night the Glenmore was burned. It was near the street-car line, for the matter of a nickel fare was now of importance in their domestic economy. Occasionally, some one of the Forest Park ladies would report on her return from the city that she had run across Mrs. Hart at Steele's, "looking old and queerer than ever, dressed in the old things she wore out here, as if she didn't care whether school kept or not, poor thing!" But in the murky light of Steele's great shop, they could not have seen the serene, almost radiant beauty of the woman's face, the beauty of a soul content with its vision of the world, in harmony with itself.

And Jackson, "reduced to the ranks" by a few grades, in that career of his, which he dubbed good-humoredly "From shirt-sleeves to shirt-sleeves, in three acts," was developing certain patient virtues of inestimable charm in the domestic circles of plain life, though not essential for brilliant success. In his box of an office next Wright's large draughting-room, he worked almost side by side with his former draughtsman Cook, who had also come back to the old firm. For some months they hardly spoke to each other; indeed, the men in Wright's generally held aloof from Hart. But they have accepted him at last. Cook has begun, even, to regain some of his old admiration for his chief, comprehending, perhaps, that in the office by his side there is slowly working out a career of real spiritual significance, if of little outward display.

As to Wright, who knows more of the man's real story than the others, he treats his old employee with a fine consideration and respect, realizing that this man is doing handsomely a thing that few men have the character to do at all. His admiration for Hart's work has grown, also, and he frankly admits that the younger man has a better talent for architecture than he himself ever possessed, as well as great cleverness and ingenuity, so necessary in an art which is intimately allied with mechanics. For it is true that after sluggish years there has revived within Hart the creative impulse, that spirit of the artist, inherent to some extent in all men, which makes the work of their hands an engrossing joy. The plans of a group of buildings, which the firm have undertaken for a university in a far Western state, have been entrusted very largely to Hart. As they grow from month to month in the voluminous sheets of drawings, they are becoming the pride of the office. And Wright generously allots the praise for their beauty where it largely belongs.

Thus the social waters of the fast-living city are rapidly rolling over the Jackson Harts. In all probability they will never again in this life come to the surface, and call for comment; for the architect and his wife have already sunk into the insignificance of the common lot, so much praised by the poets, so much despised by our good Americans of the "strenuous" school. They have had their opportunities to better themselves in the worldly scale, but there has never been any question between husband and wife of a change in their social or

material condition. They even contemplate with equanimity leaving their children in the universal struggle no better equipped than with the possession of health and a modest education, — there to meet their fate as their parents have done before them.

Almost the last public appearance of the Jackson Harts in that portion of the Chicago world which had formerly known them occurred at the elaborate dedicatory exercises of the JACKSON INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE. When the handsomely engraved invitation came to them, the architect was disinclined to attend; but Helen, who thought only of the old man's probable wish in the matter, induced her husband to take her. The exercises were held in the pretty little auditorium which occupied one wing of the large school building. There was much ceremony, and numerous speeches, besides the oration delivered by the director, Dr. Everest, on "Modern Industrialism," which was considered a masterpiece of its kind and was afterwards printed and circulated by the trustees. A bust of the founder, which fronted the stage, was first unveiled amid great applause. Dr. Everest in the introduction of his oration turned from time to time to apostrophize its rugged marble features, while he paid his tribute to the founder of the institution. What the old man—who had always avoided voluble people like the pest — would have thought of the liberal eulogy scattered on his head, and of the eloquent discourse that followed, on the future of education and the working-man, no one will ever know. The rough old face

looking inscrutably down on the little, bald-headed figure of the director gave no sign.

During the lengthy oration the architect's thoughts went wandering far astray back into his past, so closely involved with this handsome building. But Helen listened attentively to the director's flowing periods, searching his phrases for an interpretation of his purposes in regard to the school. Dr. Everest, however, was far too wary an educator to commit himself to positive ideas. Yet in the maze of his discourse there might be gathered hints of his attitude toward the problem of industrial education. After the opening tribute to the founder, "whom we may call a typical leader of our triumphant industrial democracy," the speaker dwelt glowingly on the advanced position of our country among the nations of the earth, attributing its phenomenal progress to the nature of its political and educational institutions, which had developed and encouraged the energies of such men as Powers Jackson: —

"We lead the nations of the world in the arts of peace, owing to the energy and genius of men like our noble benefactor, owing, I may say, still more to the character of our institutions, political and educational, which produce such men as he was!" Then followed a flattering contrast between the "aristocratic and mediæval education" of the English universities and the older American colleges, and the broad, liberal spirit of newer institutions, especially technical schools. The intention of the founder of the Jackson Industrial Institute, he said, was to broaden the democratic ideal, "to bring within the reach of every

child in this greatest of industrial metropoli, not only the rudiments of an education, but the most advanced technical training, by means of which he may raise himself among his fellows and advance the illimitable creative ingenuity of our race. Here will come the boy whose father labors at the bottom of the industrial ladder, and if he be worthy, if he have the necessary talent and the industry, here in our workshops and laboratories he may fit himself to mount to the very top of that ladder, and become in turn a master and leader of men, like our great benefactor! And we may well believe that the sight of those benignant features will be an inspiration to the youth to strive even as he strove. That face will kindle the noble ambitions of the learner, who will remember that our good founder once labored with his own hands at the forge not far from this monument to his greatness, and that he rose by his own unaided industry and ability to command thousands of operatives, to control millions of capital, yes, to influence the wide industrial world!

"In America, thank God, the poor man may yet rise to a position of leadership, if he be worthy. And what the world needs to-day more than all else is leaders, leaders of men. May we not prophesy that the Jackson Industrial Institute will be a large factor, yes, the largest factor of this great city, in educating leaders, and thus assisting to put an end to that wasteful and distressing antagonism between capital and labor? By the means of the education here provided, young men may raise themselves from the ranks of common labor to the position and responsibilities of capital! Let us hope that

this will be the happy result of an educational foundation provided by a great captain of industry, and placed here in the heart of the workshops of Chicago. Thus may we assist in preserving and fostering the spirit of our noble institutions by means of which man is given freedom to reap the fruits of his own labor and intelligence!" . . .

And Dr. Everest continued on this plane of eloquence for another half-hour, until even Judge Phillips, who had listened with rapt attention, began to nod in his chair. At last, when the doctor sat down, stroking his thick black beard and wiping his shining brow, loud applause broke forth from all parts of the auditorium. The applause sounded much like the ironic laughter of the gods over the travesty of the old man's purpose, to which they had just listened.

To Helen, especially, it seemed that no more complete twisting of his idea in thus bestowing his wealth were possible! However, the great school stands there, in the neighborhood where his old operatives live, — stands there and will stand there for many years, mistaken or not in its aims as one looks at this world of ours; and some day, maybe, when Dr. Everest has grasped some new form of the educational main chance, it may fall into other hands and become more nearly what its founder meant it to be, — a source of help and inspiration to the common man, who must labor all his days at common tasks, and can look to no material advancement in this life.

After the exercises the rooms of the building were thrown open for inspection, and the guests strolled

through the laboratories and workshops in little parties, discussing the oration and exclaiming over the magnificence of the appointments. The Harts wandered over the school with the rest, and the architect looked about him with a certain curiosity. As they returned to the main hall under the rotunda, he exclaimed, peering up into the dome, "Nell, I can't seem to remember this place: it looks queer and strange to me, as if somebody else had done the plans, and I had just looked over them!"

"Somebody else did do them," she answered, drawing him away from a group of people who had come out of one of the adjoining rooms.

In a little while they got their wraps and prepared to leave the institution, having a long journey before them to reach their home. As they crossed the entrance hall, they ran into Pemberton, who was alone. He bowed to Helen as though he meant to speak to her, and then catching sight of Jackson, who was behind her, he merely bent his head the fraction of an inch, and, stepping to one side, passed on. He could not, evidently, forgive a stain upon a man's honor, arrogating to himself, as so many of us do, the privileges of deity. The architect's face flushed at the slight, and he hurried his steps toward the vestibule. As they passed through the broad doorway, he said to his wife: —

"Well, Nell, I suppose I deserved it, — the old Turk!"

"No, you did not deserve it!" she replied swiftly. "But it makes no difference, dear!"

And, fortunately, there are few things that do make any great difference to real men and women, — and one of the least is the casual judgment of their fellow-men.

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